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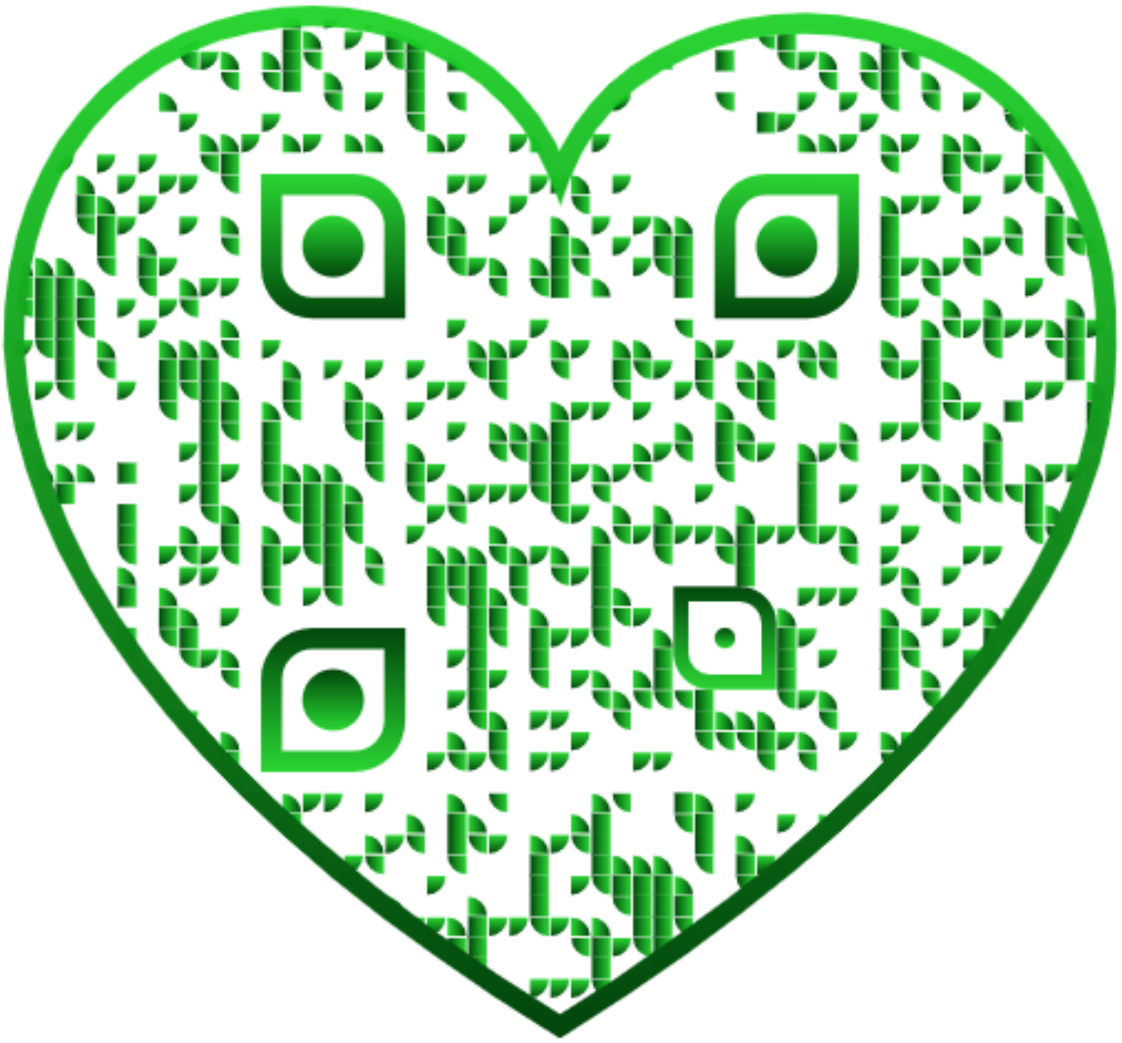

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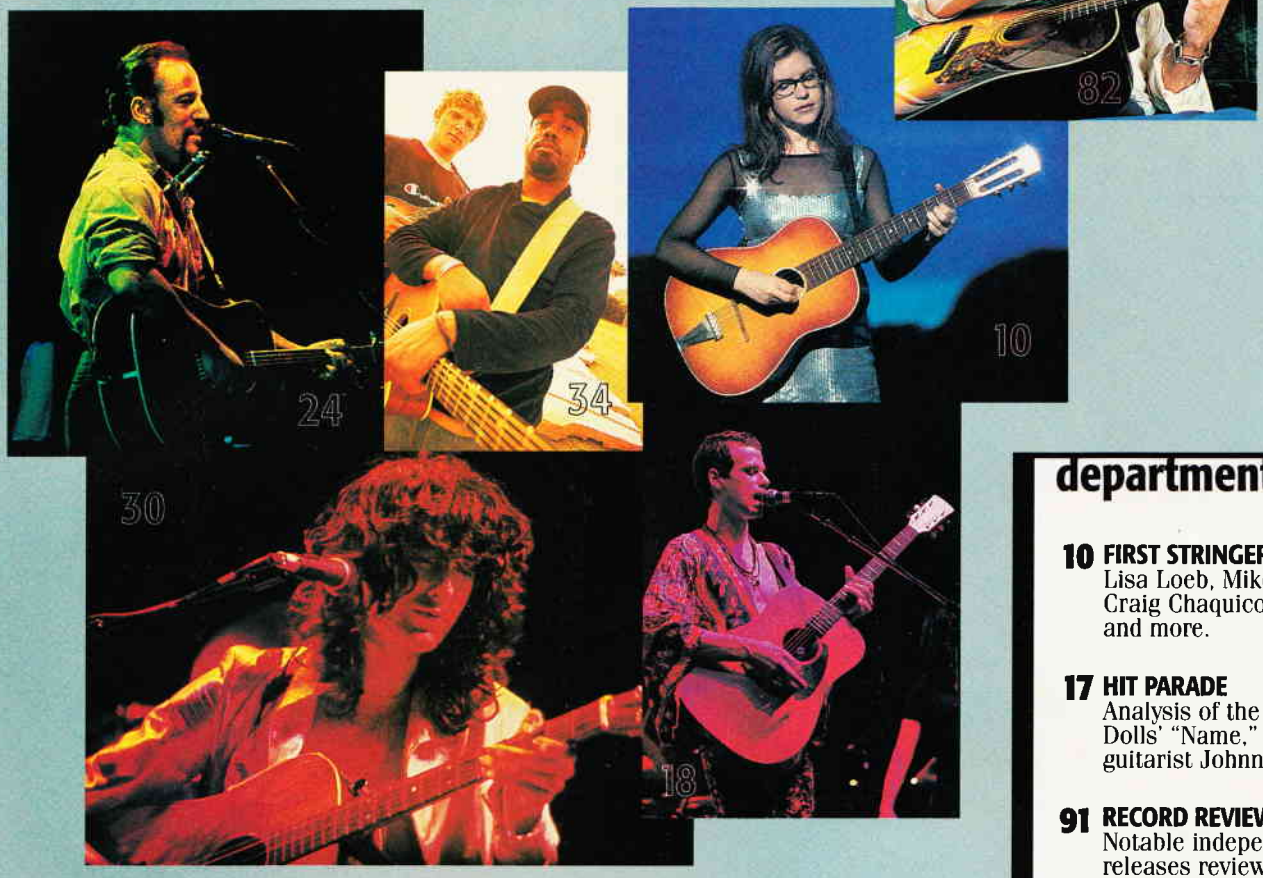

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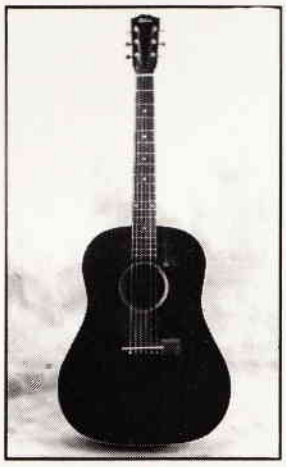

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EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES
1115 Broadway; New York, NY 10010
(212) 807-7100 Fax: (212) 627-4678
E-mail: sounding.board@guitar world.com.
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soundhole

We Came For You

Hello. This is *Guitar World Acoustic*'s debut issue, so a statement of purpose is in order. We have come to fill an aching cavity in the guitar magazine world, and to redress a great injustice. There are loads of magazines catering to electric guitarists' every whim; among them is our own much-loved parent publication, *Guitar World*. Fingerstyle guitarists, country flatpicking guitarists, low-key singer/songwriter guitarists, even collectors of vintage guitars guitarists—they all have their magazines, too.

But what about acoustic guitarists who play rock and roll? What about those tired, worn, unplugged guitarists, lugging their heavy hard-shell cases around in a cold, uncaring world?

What about *you*?

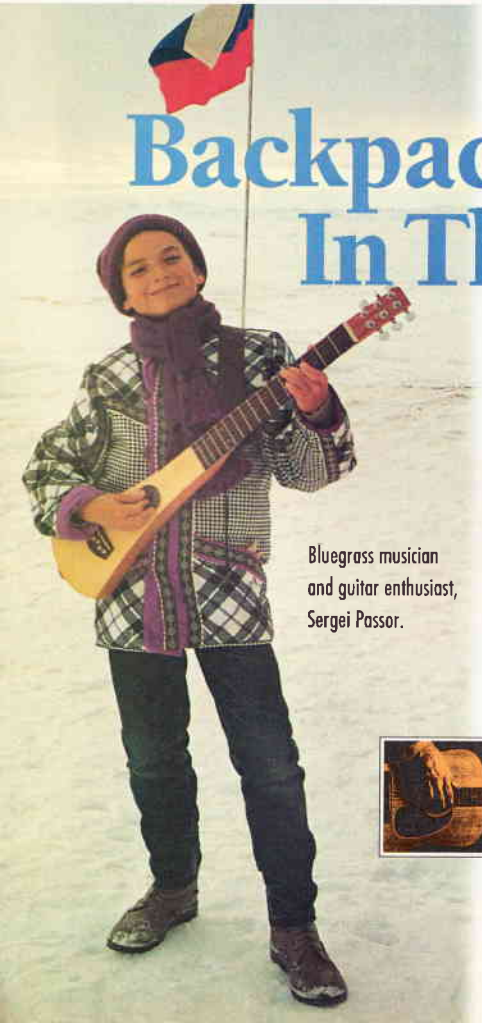
Yes, you. The acoustic classic rocker, alternative rocker, pop rocker, even punk rocker. The acoustic player who wants to learn the Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses," Nirvana's *Unplugged* version of "Come As You Are," Oasis' "Wonderwall." The guitarist who needs just a pick, a set of .012's and maybe a capo to rock.

If you're that kind of guitarist, then *Guitar World Acoustic* is for you. Our debut issue is crammed with the kind of information you not only desire, but need—the history of *MTV Unplugged*; an intimate portrait of Bruce Springsteen, and stories on rising artists like Lisa Loeb and Rusted Root's Mike Glabicki; a cover feature (by country star Radney Foster, no less) on Hootie & the Blowfish, amiable giants of the earth; a survey of Led Zeppelin's acoustic legacy; and a great lesson on the Beatles' acoustic guitar style. There's more, too: gear and record reviews; an exhaustive study of alternate tunings; and the *pièce de résistance*: transcriptions to five great tunes.

In the future, *GWA* (as we have decided to affectionately call ourselves) will bring you more of the above, as well as occasional stories and instructional material from the bluesier and more countryish sides of the fence. We fervently hope that readers of this and future issues of *Guitar World Acoustic* come away from their encounter with us with relaxed minds, twinkling eyes . . . and raw and reddened fingertips.

—HAROLD STEINBLATT
• Editor-In-Chief

Backpacker Guitars Show Up In The Coolest Places.



Bluegrass musician and guitar enthusiast, Sergei Passor.

You are looking at a Martin Backpacker guitar being played at the North Pole.

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first stringers

EDITED BY ISAIAH TROST

tails, she wins

"YOU HAVE TO IGNORE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS of you as coming out of nowhere and continue on in the direction you were going in," says Lisa Loeb, on the topic of overnight sensations. She ought to know; the youthful Loeb exploded out of Ivy League Brown University and the coffee-house circuit when "Stay," her very first single, from the soundtrack of *Reality Bites*, vaulted into the Number One slot in 1994. While various record companies wrangled to sign her, Loeb took her time, crafting the best album she could with her band, Nine Stories (named for a collection of J. D. Salinger stories). The result, issued more than a year after "Stay," is *Tails* (Geffen), a fresh, confident and uplifting take on subjects that are less so—"death, depression and mundane things happening in life."

Growing up in Dallas, Loeb had the kind of childhood that nurtures future musicians. "In my family," she states, "you *have* to play an instrument." Her first instrument was the piano, but at 14 she switched to guitar. Though music of every kind was always playing in her home, she loved David Bowie, the Kinks, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix. Most of all, Loeb was inspired by the Police "because," she explains, sounding like a J. D. Salinger character herself, "they could play all their instruments really well and it didn't mess up their music at all." Asked about female musical favorites, Loeb mentions Rickie Lee Jones and the Pretenders, but notes that "it's funny—more of my musical influences are male rock bands from England."

Though Nine Stories is a loud and rocking band, the acoustic guitar is pivotal to Loeb's recorded sound: "In the mix, we made sure that the level of the vocal and my guitar are related, so that my playing is always heard." Lisa played various guitars on the album, including a friend's Gibson J-45, but live, it's always a Taylor 512C, which she bought to replace her original Ovation acoustic-electric. On stage, she plugs the Taylor into a small Fishman amp, enjoying the extra measure of control it gives her. Her playing, not unlike that of ex-Police guitarist Andy Summers, "mixes jazzy chords and power chords."

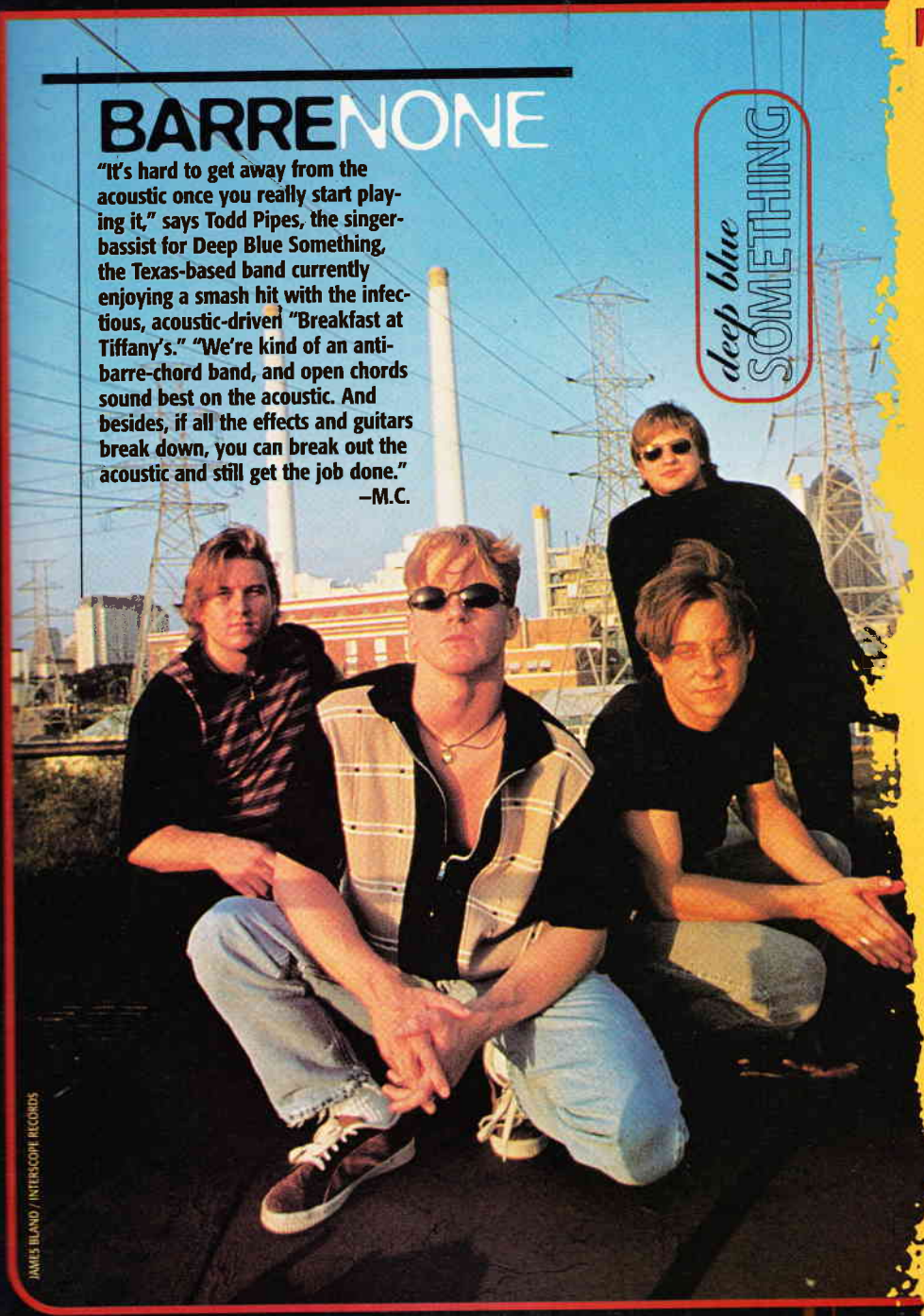
In the hands of young artists like Loeb, the acoustic guitar has acquired a new cachet that owes less to the folkies of the Sixties than to the last few seasons of *MTV Unplugged*. Very cool.

Tuning in

EDITED BY MALLAY CHARTERS

BARRE NONE

"It's hard to get away from the acoustic once you really start playing it," says Todd Pipes, the singer-bassist for Deep Blue Something, the Texas-based band currently enjoying a smash hit with the infectious, acoustic-driven "Breakfast at Tiffany's." "We're kind of an anti-barre-chord band, and open chords sound best on the acoustic. And besides, if all the effects and guitars break down, you can break out the acoustic and still get the job done." –M.C.



JAMES BLAND / INTERSCOPE RECORDS

JORMA KAUKONEN fingerpicked the blues at New York's Bottom Line, one night after he and his former bandmates in the Jefferson Airplane were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Kaukonen played the acoustic Airplane favorite "Embryonic Journey," as well as "Hesitation Blues," "Death Don't Have No Mercy" and other tunes he recorded as a member of Hot Tuna.

CHUCK PULIN / STAR FILE

"This record makes the strongest statement that I can about all the different sources I've drawn from, how much I respect them all, and how much they are a part of me," says **RORY BLOCK** of *Tornado*, her new album from Rounder Records. The record mostly departs from the thunderous Delta blues playing and singing for which Block is renowned to explore an eclectic array of styles, running the gamut from country music (including a duet with **MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER**) to fusion.

LORINDA SULLIVAN

"Record labels are always trying to force these narrow-focus albums, and make everything sound like either an uptempo or a downtempo version of one category," says Block. "I like it better when I buy someone's album and they touch on a million different attitudes."

JOHN HIATT came off the road on March 3 after a three-week stint opening for Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band. Hiatt has been touring since the beginning of 1996, in support of his Capitol debut, *Walk On*.

Singer-songwriter **IRIS DEMENT** is preparing to go into the studio to record the

picking partners

IT'S A MATCH MADE IN ACOUSTIC HEAVEN: Martin and Co., one of the most renowned names in the guitar business, has teamed with MTV, one of today's biggest propagators of acoustic music, to produce the limited edition *MTV Unplugged* Martin guitar. The guitar, which was unveiled in January at the National Association of Music Merchandisers' (NAMM) trade show in Anaheim, California, will be available only through the end of the year. This full-sized dreadnought, on which the word "Unplugged" is inlaid in Paua shell down the length of the ebony fingerboard, has a two-piece back crafted of East Indian rosewood on the bass (upper) side and mahogany on the treble (lower) side. It has a solid Sitka spruce soundboard, a herringbone marquetry strip down the center of the back, ebony-enclosed chrome tuning machines and an ebony bridge. It comes with a satin finish or, at extra cost, with polished gloss lacquer body and headplate.

The interior label bears the signature of C.F. Martin IV, Martin's chairman and CEO. Says Martin, "*MTV Unplugged* focused unprecedented attention on the unique features and universal appeal of the unamplified acoustic guitar. The design and materials of the *MTV Unplugged* limited-edition guitar were carefully selected to reflect the quality and purity of the show." The guitar's suggested retail price is $2,200 with a satin finish, or $2,450 with gloss. –M.C.

songs of himself

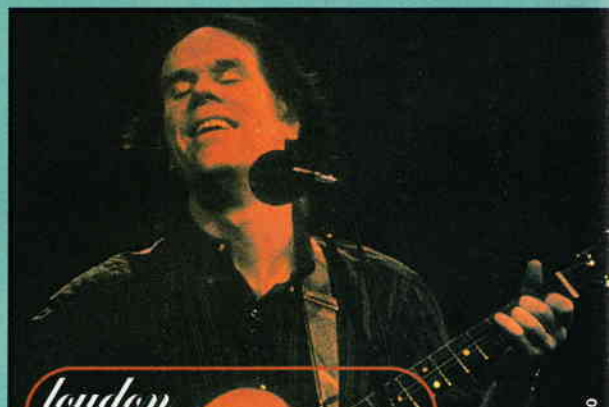
THE DISTINCTIVE HIGH TENOR WAIL that made the charts with "Dead Skunk" in 1972 has deepened a bit, but Loudon Wainwright's dark comic muse remains powerful. His new *Grown Man* (Virgin) is the latest in a long line of albums that do what the best art should–find the universal in the personal. "You have to write about something," says Loudon, "and for some reason, I picked me. I *am* interested in what is happening to me, from the most mundane things like watching your hair go down the shower drain to having an argument with your daughter and feeling like a complete idiot. It's what interests me and I write about it."

When Wainwright was originally signed by Atlantic Records, the label tried to record him in a band setting with "some of the hottest studio cats at that time," but ended up releasing the spare voice-and-guitar album that Loudon had envisioned. He's worked with other musicians on most of his 14 subsequent albums, including English guitar great Richard Thompson.

Wainwright is self-effacing when it comes to his own guitar playing, stating, "If you play an instrument long enough, you begin to feel comfortable. I know about seven chords and break lots of strings." However rudimentary his skills are, he's always highly effective accompanying himself, punctuating and dramatizing his lyric phrases with his flatpicking. Loudon plays Martin dreadnoughts exclusively, with a D-21 for recording and a D-28 on the road.

"I know there are a lot of new acoustics that are great, but Martins are just about perfect for what I do–the quality is always good." He travels with a very basic rig–a Martin Thinline pickup and a Countryman DI box, "not caring to use an equalizer."

Wainwright's legacy to music will certainly be more than his songs and records. His two oldest children, Rufus and Martha, from a youthful marriage to Canadian folk artist Kate McGarrigle, are accomplished singer-songwriters. Rufus will probably record a major label debut this year and Martha joins her dad on "Father/Daughter Dialogue," from *Grown Man.* Appropriately, the dialogue is a respectful disagreement about Wainwright's songs and how close they are to the truth.



bringing it all back home

"I knew that this collection of songs was personal and intimate," says ex-Waterboys leader Mike Scott of his powerful solo debut, ***Bring 'Em All In*** (Chrysalis), "so it felt good to do everything myself."

"Everything" is exactly what Scott has done, in a self-written and self-played album that pays tribute to musical forebears Bob Dylan, whose songwriting style deeply influenced Scott's own, and Paul McCartney, who pioneered the idea of the total solo recording. A humane, open-hearted spirituality pervades the whole album, which was recorded in Scotland's Findhorn Center, a New Age community where Scott rejuvenated himself after putting an end to the Waterboys.

Turned on to music by the classic pop singles he heard as a child in Edinburgh, Scott was playing the guitar and writing songs by the age of 10. He recalls his early rock and roll days fondly: "You've heard of garage bands? I had front-room bands. In Edinburgh, front rooms weren't as cold as garages."

Forming the Waterboys in England in 1982, Scott went in for a horn-drenched "big rock sound" on the band's first three albums. Relocation in 1986 had the effect of redirecting Scott's musical endeavors. "It took a sojourn in Ireland to teach me to hear my own country's music with fresh ears. I got really into Celtic, Scottish and Irish music and started playing more acoustic than electric. When we'd recruit members for the band, I looked for fiddlers, accordionists and whistlers instead of sax and keyboard players."

Another move, this time to America in 1991, led to more musical changes and the end of the band. "I tried to assemble a new Waterboys in New York. I found lots of great musicians, but in the end, it felt less like a band and more like me and some hired hands. It was time for me to do something new."

After years on the concert circuit with a band, Scott is now doing one-man shows and relying on his guitar-playing more than ever. "I'm not a picker," he says, "and though I can play lead, I don't do it much. What I am is a rhythm player and a chunky chord player." Scott's home and studio guitar is a Martin Shenandoah, which he supplements with a Taylor 12-string. On the road, he travels with two acoustic-electric Takamine jumbo cutaways. Appearing alone on stage before an audience was "a great challenge at first, but it's brilliant for me now," says Scott. American audiences will have the opportunity to judge for themselves come February '96, as Scott launches a national tour in support of ***Bring 'Em All In***.

Tuning in

follow-up to 1994's acclaimed *My Life* (Warner Bros.). DeMent spent last fall penning tunes for the new album, which is due out this summer, although she did take some time out to play some dates with **MERLE HAGGARD**.

"It can be *so* bad, y'know, doing what we were doing, playing frat gigs and crappy bars to nobody. It's so hard, but when it's good, it's great," says **EDWIN McCAIN**, summing up 1994, the year he and his band paid their road dues by playing over 300 dates. McCain's debut on Lava/Atlantic, *Honor Among Thieves*, is currently making waves nationwide, helped along by the single "Solitude," which features a guest appearance by **HOOTIE & THE BLOWFISH**'s **DARIUS RUCKER** and **MARK RYAN**.

Philo/Rounder recording artist **BILL MORRISEY** will publish his first novel in April, *Edson* (Knopf), the story of a singer/songwriter living in a small New Hampshire mill town facing a crossroads in his career. Philo/Rounder just released his seventh album, *You'll Never Get to Heaven*.

Two new excellent performance videos from Rounder: *Doc's Guitar Jam*, featuring flatpickers **DOC WATSON**, **TONY RICE**, **DAN CRARY**, **STEVE KAUFMAN** and **JACK LAWRENCE**; and **TONY RICE**:

flesh tones

"I USED TO SAY THE MUSIC INDUSTRY was so awful and that MTV was destroying everything," declares Lava/Atlantic artist Jill Sobule, whose self-titled and endearingly quirky 1995 album included "I Kissed a Girl," a surprise radio and video hit. "MTV is my friend now!" The MTV exposure brought her to the attention of an audience segment she never aimed for. "I always thought my music is singer-songwriter-oriented, very much in the spirit of artists like Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Tom Waits, for a pretty adult audience," she explains. "But now my average fan wears braces. I hear from a lot of teens."

A native of Denver, Sobule was the younger sister of "the neighborhood guitar god." It was he who taught her her first chords. She later studied briefly with a former accompanist to singer Nat King Cole. From her parents' record collection and her own addiction to movies, she picked up many of the pre-rock, jazz, Brazilian and film-music influences that abound on her album.

Growing up, Sobule never even imagined a career as a singer and never shared the original songs she wrote in place of a journal. While on a college-abroad program in Spain, she bought a handmade flamenco guitar and, on a lark, went busking in the streets with a friend. Amazingly, a Spanish night club owner hired her and her partner that same afternoon for a two-month gig. Dropping out of college, she returned to Denver to do open mics, making a name for herself locally.

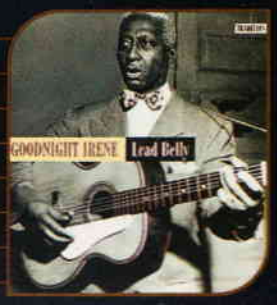
"There was a naiveté about the Denver music scene that doesn't exist any longer," she says nostalgically. "The years there, I didn't think about getting a record deal, a showcase, or what would get me on the radio. We had a passport to just play whatever the hell we wanted to. It gave me the freedom and ability to grow without worrying about who was in the audience."

Sobule plays lots of different guitars, both acoustic and electric, on her album, including an old Gretsch Chet Atkins Country Gentleman and an Epiphone classical. Surprisingly, her main instrument, which she uses for recording, performing and songwriting, is her Vagabond Travel guitar. "It's almost like another limb; it's so easy to play and carry around," says Sobule of the extremely lightweight Vagabond, which she acquired after a back injury. Sobule's playing style, with its punctuated, piano-like comping and jazzy sensibility, is both mellow and pungent. Her tone, she says, is a function of the fact that she plays with the fleshy part of her fingers. "I can't imagine playing with nails. I might mangle my fingers, but I have to feel that contact with the strings."

VAGABOND MUSIC

Old Friends

A mother lode of long unavailable folk, blues, jazz and world music classics has been tapped for release on CD, thanks to the acquisition and revival of the Tradition label by Rykodisc. The first batch of reissues, all budget-priced, is now in stores, including music by artists of special interest to acoustic guitar fans: Odetta, Big Bill Broonzy, Lead Belly, Lightnin' Hopkins, Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem, and the amazing flamenco guitarist Carlos Montoya. Future reissues are in the works from Woody Guthrie, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Ewan McColl and many more.



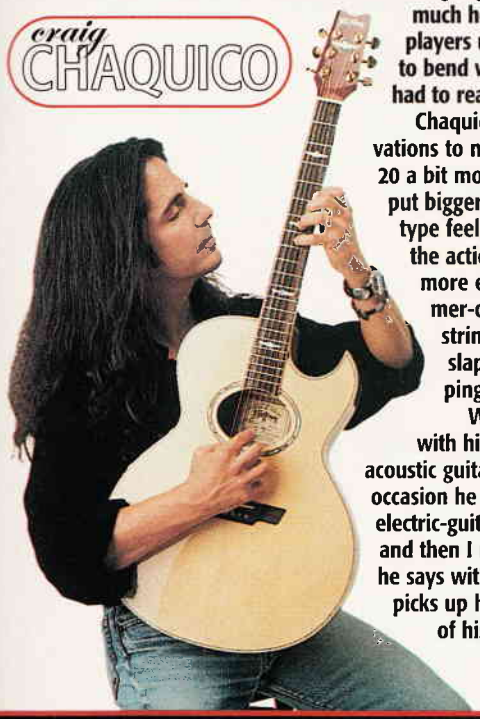
METAMORPHOSIS

SIX YEARS AGO, if you'd said to Craig Chaquico that in 1996 he would be a major artist in the arena of New Age acoustic guitar music, he probably would have exclaimed, "Get out!" Fact is, when Chaquico packed up his Les Pauls and Marshalls in 1990 and quit the platinum arena-rock icons Jefferson Starship (with whom he had held the lead guitar slot for 16 years) to embark on a solo career, he had every intention of delivering an album of full-on electric guitar bluster.

"Initially, I started working with Mike Clink," says Chaquico. "Mike produced all the Guns N' Roses albums and was the engineer on a lot of the heavier Starship albums. The idea was to produce this electric guitar album, so I started rehearsing around the house and in the studio. Then my wife became pregnant, and the acoustic guitar became a lot more welcome around the house than an electric guitar with stacks of 4x12 cabinets in the living room."

For Chaquico, who's just released *A Thousand Pictures*, his third album of instrumental acoustic rock, it was a rather fortunate turn of events. His first two albums, 1993's *Acoustic Highway* and 1994's *Acoustic Planet*, both topped *Billboard*'s New Age chart, and Chaquico relates with pride: "The second album actually knocked Yanni out of Number One for a while."

Making the switch from electric to acoustic was not a snap, though. "The acoustic is a little harder to play," says Chaquico. "There's no volume and feedback, so you have to play with more articulation and your technique really has to be there. At first, I put electric guitar strings on the acoustic, but it just didn't sound the same. So I went back to a medium light gauge [.012 to .054], which is much heavier than what most electric players use. It was also much tougher to bend with a wound G string. So I had to really strengthen my fingers."



Chaquico also introduced some innovations to make his trusty Washburn EA-20 a bit more electric-player friendly. "I put bigger frets on it, sort of a Les Paul-type feel," he discloses, "and lowered the action. That allowed me to apply more electric techniques like hammer-ons, bending and stretching strings as well as stuff like bass-slapping and Van Halen-type tapping stuff."

While Chaquico is quite thrilled with his newfound glory as an acoustic guitar hero, he does admit that on occasion he gets that old itch for a pure electric-guitar power rush. "Every now and then I really jones for the electric," he says with a gleam in his eye. Then he picks up his acoustic, back in the reality of his New Age.

–MORDECHAI KLEIDERMACHER

Tuning in

The Video Collection, featuring **SAM BUSH**, **MARK O'CONNOR**, **JERRY DOUGLAS** and **DAVID GRISMAN**, among others. Coming from Stefan Grossman's Vestapol Videos this spring is a **CHET ATKINS** instructional video.

MICHAEL MULLER

"My dad taught me to yodel when I was six. I never thought I'd be yodeling in New York City," confesses **JEWEL**, who did just that on a recent concert stop in Manhattan. On the other hand, the 21-year-old Alaskan native, who only a couple of years ago was living in a van at a San Diego beach, probably never thought she'd be playing Dorothy to **ROGER DALTREY**'s Tin Man either, which is what she did in a TNN production of *The Wizard of Oz* that aired last November. The video for her new single, "Who Will Save Your Soul," off her Atlantic debut, *Pieces of You*, is currently in rotation on VH1.

Acoustic music has a new home on VH1: *Crossroads*. Airing Monday through Friday at 11:30 p.m., the half-hour program offers new videos and live, acoustic-based performances from the likes of **JOAN OSBORNE**, **DAVE MATTHEWS**, **BLUES TRAVELER**, **MELISSA ETHERIDGE** and **SOUL ASYLUM**.

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Goo Goo Dolls

what's in a "name"?

A GOO NAMED Johnny UNPLUGS, RETUNES AND STRIKES GOLD.

BY *Robert Dye*

WHAT'S IN A TUNING? For Goo Goo Dolls guitarist Johnny Rzeznik, composer of the breakthrough hit "Name," a tuning has meant the payoff to years of sweating it out in every small bar across the country. Although the band's music is typically on the hard and loud side, à la Cheap Trick, Dramarama and the Replacements, Rzeznik and Co. finally hit it big in 1995 with the sweet, acoustic "Name."

"The tuning is [*from low to high*] D A E A E E," Rzeznik says. "I was sitting up late one night, fiddling with the guitar. I was tired of standard tuning, and just started winding tuning pegs up and down until I found something that sounded good. And then the notes, or chords, or whatever you call them, just started coming out."

To all acoustic guitarists eager to twist their tuning pegs to hell for that "Name" sound, Rzeznik has a bit of advice. "I broke tons of strings working on that tuning, mainly the B-string. When I was tuning the B all the way up to E, everyone would cringe and turn away as it creaked up in pitch. So what I do now is take the B-string gauge off and replace it with a high E gauge."

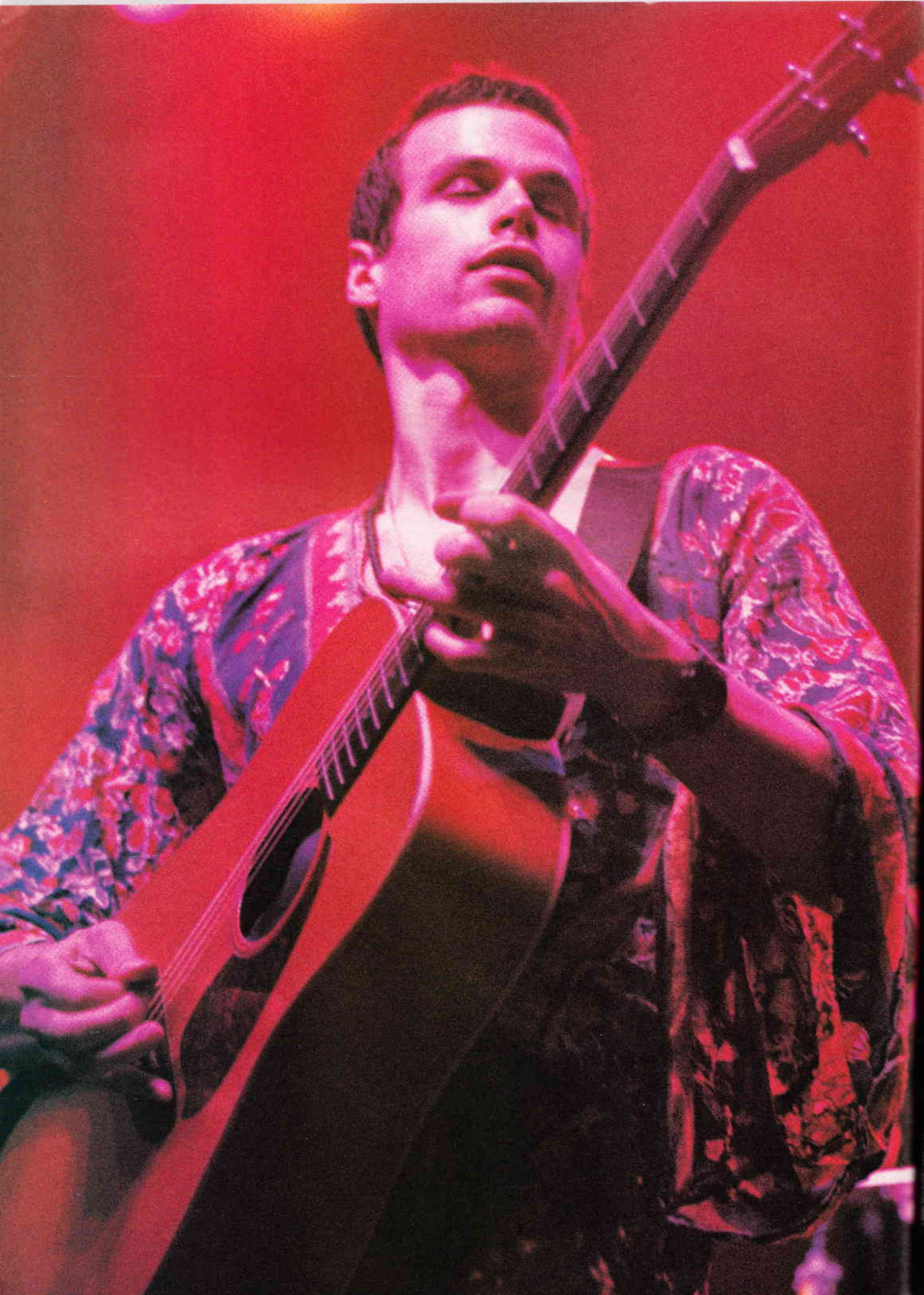
The recorded version of "Name" (*A Boy Named Goo*, Warner Bros.) features two acoustic guitars playing the rhythm patterns, and a third acoustic with an E-bow run across it to create a sustaining effect. The rhythm pattern is, primarily, a descending bass line picked on the sixth and fifth strings, with the open fourth through first strings arpeggiated. The resulting sound, with the two high strings ringing in unison, gives the impression of an army of guitars.

"The song came together in a couple of days," notes Rzeznik. "I sort of like to see what my music makes me feel like before I write the words. I think music can prompt the lyrics–it evokes more of a mood and a feel than just writing words. 'Name' was the one time I actually felt like a writer more than a guy who just plays a guitar."

Rzeznik's acoustic guitar of choice is a '94 Epiphone PR775SCE. "I love the tone of it," he says. "You can definitely get a great guitar for around $450. I've played guitars that cost three or four times as much, and the Epiphone sounds just as good. You find that one magic, cheap guitar that sounds so sweet, and then some scientist tries to analyze it and comes up with a ridiculous replica for $2000." Inexpensive guitars also bring with them another side benefit. "If you smash it, it's not that big a loss," laughs Rzeznik.

[FOR A FULL TRANSCRIPTION OF "NAME," SEE GUITAR WORLD, FEB. '96]

CHRIS GILL



the AGONY & the ecstasy

THESE ARE HIGH TIMES FOR Rusted Root's MICHAEL GLABICKI, THE FIRST MAN TO SUCCESSFULLY TREAT DEPRESSION WITH AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR.

BY *Arwyn Pike*

PITTSBURGH'S **RUSTED ROOT** is on a mission: carefully, without fanfare, it is working to bring a sense of community back into the rock music world. Approaching platinum status with its first major label album, *When I Woke* (Mercury), the group prides itself on building a career on its own terms, without compromising its music or its image. With the Grateful Dead as its business (and, to a lesser extent, musical) role model, Rusted Root has been building a growing fan base attracted to its exotic, percussion-heavy rhythms, environmental concerns, gentle hippie vibe and cool merchandising.

Interestingly, the Root has its roots in the personal rather than the communal. Founder and lead acoustic guitarist Michael Glabicki applied himself musically—woodshedding with his acoustic for hours at a time—in order to stave off a deep psychological depression he experienced during his college years. It's no wonder that he frequently uses the word "healing" in talking about his music.

Glabicki and his Root cohorts came together in Pittsburgh, in 1990, slowly amassing a devoted local following. The group's live shows became known for their strong element of ritualized audience participation. To give their fans a piece of the band to take home, Rusted Root recorded and marketed an independent album called *Cruel Sun*; they easily sold tens of thousands of copies. Naturally, major label interest quickly materialized. Mercury Records signed the group and paired them with producer Bill Bottrell, of Sheryl Crow fame.

The Rusted Root phenomenon is about connection and communication with the audience on a deep level, an effort to turn every concert into a shared ritual and an exchange of energy between the band and the fans. The music that goes along with it isn't easy to pigeonhole—a kind of World Beat Wall of Sound that churns and swirls with flashes of African, Latin, Indian and Caribbean colors. The two hit singles from *When I Woke* exemplify the approach—on "Ecstasy," Glabicki comes on like Carlos Santana's acoustic-wielding little brother, offering pounding celestial lines to the heavens. "Send Me on My Way" is no less urgent, but catchier, a celebratory feast of percussion, flute and African-flavored guitar. Always soaring high above the stew is Glabicki and his pungent acoustic.

If Glabicki and company succeed in building the fan-based community they envision, "Rootheads" may someday become as common as "Deadheads." That wouldn't at all be a bad thing. The natural, no-tech music of Rusted Root is needed in a technology-obsessed world careening toward a new millenium. And, if nothing else, it's got a great beat.

GUITAR WORLD ACOUSTIC: What inspired you to become a musician?

MICHAEL GLABICKI: I had dreamt about it a lot when I was little. What actually kicked it off for me was that I had been in college for a year and suffering from severe depression, and just needed to do something different. For me, at the time, playing was the only way I knew how to

really and truly express what I needed to express to stay healthy. I just dropped out of college and started writing. I got turned on by various people—from Cat Stevens to Michael Hedges to Van Halen—everything was a turn-on at that point.

GWA: So you wouldn't point to any one particular player as an influence?

GLABICKI: No. I just spent thousands of hours and turned the guitar into what I wanted it to be.

GWA: How about third world influences?

GLABICKI: I guess I'd heard some of Peter Gabriel's stuff, and then it seemed to be all around.

GWA: Was there anything "World Beat" about the Pittsburgh scene?

GLABICKI: When I was in middle school, my cousin was in a reggae band called the Core, and he started teaching me drums, which really turned me on. Later on, in high school, I started to become politically active. I went down to Nicaragua for a few weeks as soon as I'd finished high school.

GWA: The politics must certainly enter into the kind of music you do.

GLABICKI: Partly that, but the music became completely something with its own life. A lot of the World Beat music comes through meditation on the instrument itself. Those rhythms and those melodies are within the collective consciousness to come through you and heal in certain ways. For me, when I was really depressed, what I did was sit in my room for 12 hours at a time, playing. I wasn't going out to listen.

GWA: Whatever it was that caused your depression, you found the strength to break out of it.

GLABICKI: It was heavy depression and I couldn't see through the darkness. You can heal yourself through music and expand your consciousness, your consciousness of the world and even your spirit. Pretty heavy-duty stuff.

GWA: You were lucky to find some good musicians to join you in expressing these feelings. How does the collaboration work in your band?

GLABICKI: What usually happens is that I'll bring in a song on acoustic guitar and lead vocal, and we'll get together and the members will contribute their parts on their own instruments. Other times, we come together to totally revamp an idea and stretch it out into different rhythmic ideas. Structure and melodic ideas come through everyone's vision of what the song is. "Back to the Earth" and "Cruel Sun" on the album were just jam-oriented. It becomes a group meditation at that point, morphing into a group healing instead of individual healing.

GWA: So when you guys play live, it's never a note-for-note recreation of the record.

GLABICKI: No. But there are some guidelines we draw to keep our feet on the ground. We fall back on certain structures, so we know that this change or that is coming. Then again, there are some nights where we blow that off and go crazy and it works out fine.

GWA: How do you work with your producer in terms of the album's overall sound? Your acoustic guitar is heard so clearly over layers of percussion. Do you overdub much?

GLABICKI: We basically recorded as live as we could—vocals, acoustic guitar. I'd record with my pickup. "Cruel Sun" was done in one take. I might go back and strum some acoustic parts on a track just to warm it up a bit. Basically, it's a live record with five or six instruments overdubbed on each song. We didn't strip down to bass and drums and rebuild from there.

GWA: Do you play acoustic, exclusively?

GLABICKI: Yeah, I don't play electric at all right now. I think that I am going to have to go out and buy an electric guitar. On the album, Patrick [Norman], our bassist, played the electric track on "Food & Creative Love." It's the only cut with electric guitar.

'In the different stages in which we as a band grew musically, we always included the AUDIENCE in where we were going.'

GWA: You incorporate so many ethnic styles in your guitar playing. Have you studied African techniques, for example?

GLABICKI: No, not at all. It just comes out like that. I'm familiar with a lot of kinds of music, but you get that just from watching TV. It's in our commercials, in the movies we see—everywhere. It wasn't just any one thing. When I saw Michael Hedges and that he had detuned his guitar into different tunings, I thought, "That's cool, I'm going to do something different here." So I went home and cranked the tuning pegs around and came up with a sitar-y tuning. D A D G A D [from low to high] was one of the tunings, also open G and E minor. For me, [the ethnic sound] comes from the instrument itself and the emotional state of where you are at, mentally and spiritually. It's not about going out and finding sounds to incorporate. It comes through on its own rather than being externally applied. I'm not dissing the cultural aspect of the music. But this music is all around us.

GWA: Your group has been part of the H.O.R.D.E. tour. Do you find a musical kinship with some of the other H.O.R.D.E. bands?

GLABICKI: Not so much musically. But I do identify with them in a community sense, in that these bands have been doing it themselves in their marketing and touring from a grass-roots level, I identify with them in a community sense. We've done it that way, too, in terms of touring and merchandising—we would go out and sell albums on our own until we got to the point where we needed a record company to take over the job.

GWA: So there's a Grateful Dead-type of inspiration in the way you deal with your fans.

GLABICKI: It's really the only way I think it can be done. For any kind of true musical experience or community, you really need to do it that way. It would have really sucked if we had gotten big all at once because we definitely wouldn't be where we are musically. In the different stages in which we as a band grew musically, we always included the audience in where we were going. From the very beginning, when we started in a warehouse here in Pittsburgh, we had a very ritualistic vibe at our show. It wasn't so much to come see a concert, but more to participate in the ritual of what we were doing. The stage was about a foot high in the warehouse, and people would sit on the floor and eat before the show. We'd sit and eat, too, and then it would be time to get started, so we'd go up and play. And play for two or three hours. It was phenomenal. Sometimes, we'd write tunes right there. A person dancing five feet away from me would inspire a movement in my music. Body movement and energy swirls—everybody was part of it. It wasn't like attending some big concert; it was about everyone jamming together.

GWA: As Rusted Root grows in popularity, it must be hard to keep on doing the warehouse kind of show.

GLABICKI: Yeah, it's definitely different now. What we learned in those early days was how to take energy and give back and learn together with an intimate audience. That built something that we carried on to the next stage, which was playing 500-600 seat places. In theaters, you learn to adapt what you already know to that level. In arenas, you are dealing with oceans as opposed to sitting by a stream, with masses of energy as opposed to individual energy. You can almost adapt the human body to the crowd body, and read the mass energy like you'd read the individual's. That's how we're doing it now, how I get by. It's tough sometimes, because we've just jumped quite a bit. I had a tough time this last tour till the

very end of it, when I started understanding new tricks to channel that energy through.

GWA: The success of Rusted Root is obviously a double-edged sword—the acceptance on a large scale means so much more demand on your time.

GLABICKI: You've just got to start drawing your boundaries of what you will and will not do. And keep your loved ones close by you, too.

GWA: What's nice is that you stand for something very different than some of today's pop megastars.

GLABICKI: I think we reflect more of a camaraderie with the audience because what we're about is something we all contribute to.

GWA: Still, you want to break out of cult status to a more general audience.

GLABICKI: I think the Grateful Dead did a good job. They kept in good touch with their community and they didn't need MTV to do anything for them. That's what we are trying to get to on some level. Using newsletters to create a community, our own kind of community, and to multiply, rather than needing MTV. MTV doesn't want to play our stuff, and that's kind of a compliment.

GWA: Since *When I Woke* was recorded in late 1994, you must be getting ready for the follow-up.

GLABICKI: Yeah, in a couple of weeks we start. It will be recorded here in Pittsburgh. We're renting out an old hall and having our gear brought in and set up just the way we want it—instead of going into the studio and sounding like everything else. We want to get good acoustics—big church kind of rooms for reverb.

GWA: Can you clue us in on what will be different about the new record?

GLABICKI: I think we'll dip more into the Indian music sounds—tabla, sitar. More introspective song lyrics will be on it than the community-based words of the last album.

GWA: Do you do much co-writing of songs?

GLABICKI: Yeah. I think I'm a very telepathic person. I am writing with a lot of people, tuning into their vibrations, stepping through doorways with them. There are songs I could swear I wrote with John [Buynak, woodwinds/percussion player] and we never sat down and wrote them. The age we are heading into is one where that thin veil that makes us see ourselves as separate is dissolving. We are seeing that we can exist on many levels and we can write songs on other levels, too. Once that happens, we're all going to be screwed with copyrights. [*laughs*] GWA

Root Music

Michael Glabicki, Rusted Root's altered tuning maven, talks about his eclectic approach to the guitar.

BY JIMMY BROWN

"I approach the guitar as if it were an orchestra in my hands," says Michael Glabicki, Rusted Root's main guitarist and composer. "It's a string instrument, and also a percussion instrument. You've got a drum set, tympani and string ensemble all right there at your fingertips."

Glabicki's preference for the acoustic guitar came rather late in his development. "I played a lot of electric guitar in rock bands back in high school," he recalls. "I was really into Eddie Van Halen for a while. I actually didn't really get into playing the acoustic guitar until I was about 19 and started writing my own music."

Using altered tunings is one of the cornerstones of Glabicki's playing and composing style. "Usually, when I sit down to play by myself, I'll just start turning the tuning pegs until I find something that resonates in me," he says. "I use E minor tuning (E B E G B E) for 'Food & Creative Love.'" For the bluegrass flavored "Rain," Glabicki uses open G tuning (D G D G B D). "We've played a lot of acoustic-oriented music festivals in northern New York State, and I think that was probably the inspiration for my bluegrass type of playing." He adds, "The majority of tunes on our next album are in open G tuning.

"I use D A D G A D tuning on 'Cat Turned Blue' and 'Laugh at the Sun,' " Glabicki notes, "even for the solos. Whenever I'm playing in an altered tuning, like D A D G A D, that's substantially different from standard tuning, I tend to approach the guitar more like it's a drone instrument–using a dulcimer style of playing where you finger about two of the notes and the rest are open, and you have lots of unisons happening."

Glabicki draws much of his musical inspiration from his rather large arsenal of guitars. "My main guitar is a 1971 Guild D-25," he says. "It's a beautiful axe, cherry red, no cutaway. I use light gauge acoustic strings [.012's], which are actually rather thick. They're a bit harder to play on than extra lights, but they have a better tone. I also like to set my action higher than normal, with a lot of bow in the neck," he adds. "I want to get a clean, buzz-free tone so I can take a full strum, beginning with my hand above my head, without the strings going sharp or buzzing when I hit them hard. Sometimes my hands get sore, but to me, the tone is the most important consideration, so I put up with the stiffer action."

And how does Glabicki deal with the intonation problems that often result from high action? "I usually work it out with each tuning," he says.

"One of the reasons I play so many guitars is that I like to keep certain guitars in certain tunings. For instance, I like to keep the Guild D-25 tuned to D A D G A D."

Glabicki varies his technique to fit the occasion. "For strumming and flatpicking, I use nylon medium-heavy picks," he says. "They give me a 'fleshier' attack than plastic picks do. It's amazing how something as simple as the kind of pick you use can affect your attack and your overall sound so much.

"For fingerpicking, I usually use just my thumb and index finger," Glabicki explains. "My fingerpicking technique is more like what people use when playing a 12-string–pressing down and pulling-off, as opposed to plucking. It's more like a banjo technique actually." He adds, "I don't really use my other fingers for fingerpicking unless I'm grabbing a chord. I try to grow my nails, but they're hard to maintain. Occasionally I'll rip a fingernail completely off."

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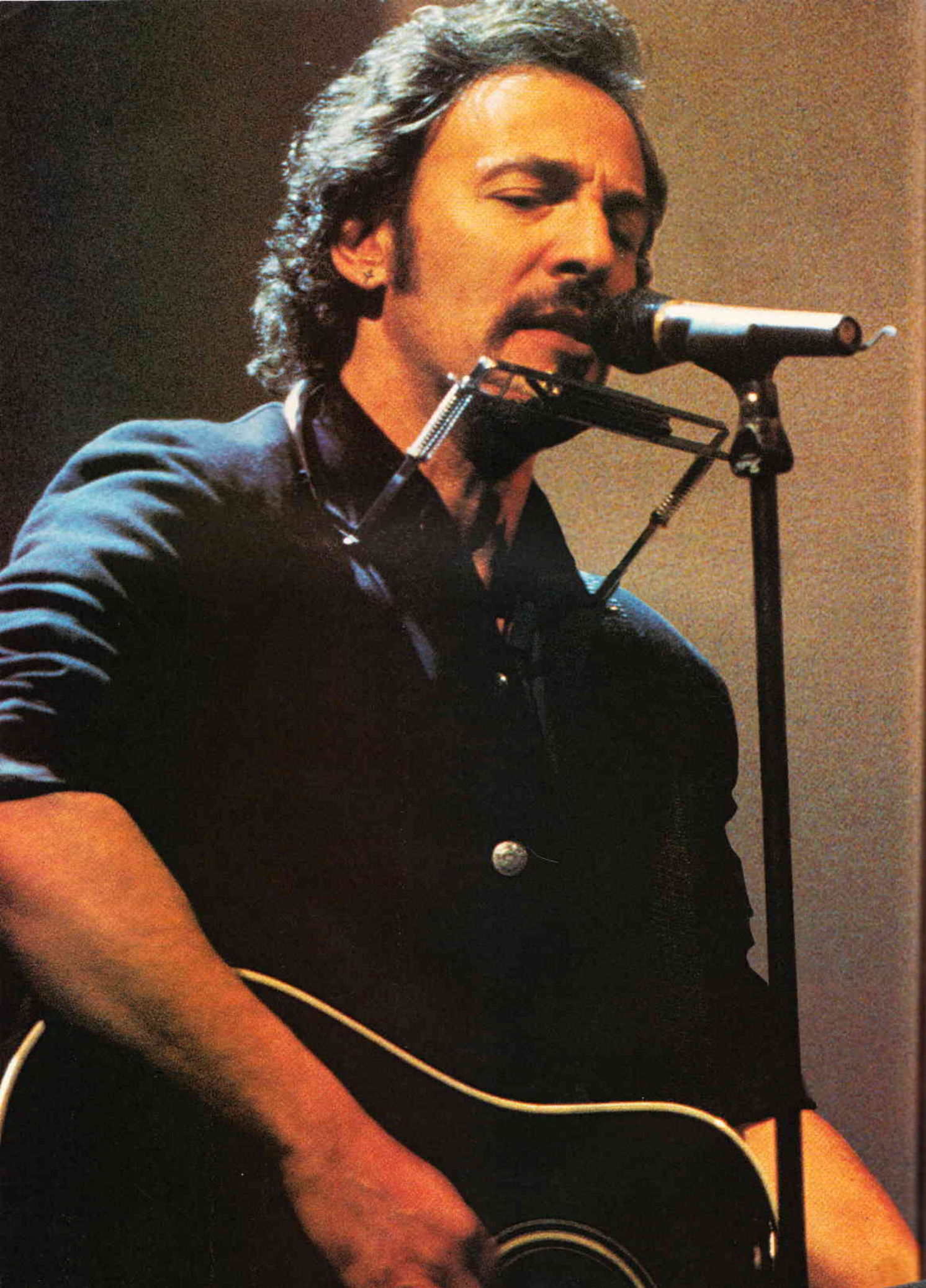


WORKING CLASS HERO

Bruce Springsteen HITS THE ROAD IN SEARCH OF *THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD.*

BY *Gary Graff*

Bruce Springsteen is trying to be a proper host. It's backstage at the spanking new Rosemont Theatre in suburban Chicago, and much to his chagrin Springsteen can't find a proper iced beverage for a guest. Perhaps the promoters figured that since this was a solo show, Springsteen wouldn't need a full array of rock and roll accoutrements.

"Is there any beer or anything?" the performer asks as he looks around. "What . . . they didn't give us any beer? Well, you're welcome to some of that Jack Daniels," he says, pointing towards a mostly empty bottle on the counter.

NEAL PRESTON / RETNA LTD.

He may not have much to offer in the way of refreshments, but Springsteen's spirits are high as he entertains a steady stream of visitors. There are writers from out of town. Reps from his British record label. And Eric Dinyer, the Kansas City artist whose painting adorns the cover of Springsteen's new album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad*.

Later on, filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich, a pal from Los Angeles, walks in with his daughter and a friend. They're in Chicago working on a sequel of *To Sir With Love* with Sidney Portier.

"Whoa, big excitement!" Springsteen says, leaping up to greet them. "I can't believe you're here. Good Lord, this is a treat!"

The backstage scenes of bonhomie are in marked contrast to what had transpired before an audience of 4,400 earlier in the evening. There, Springsteen—accompanying himself with just guitars and harmonicas—presented a bare-boned, two-hour show that showcased the somber material from *Tom Joad* along with similarly bleak material from his other albums, including revamped versions of "Adam Raised a Cain," "Darkness on the Edge of Town," "Nebraska" and "Born in the U.S.A.," the last number presented in a harrowing, bluesy arrangement.

The concert was a different creature from the buoyant, take-no-prisoners spectacles that established Springsteen's reputation as one of rock's best live performers. Taken together, the acoustic songs comprised a morality piece in which Springsteen examined the lives of migrants, drifters, criminals and just plain Joes hitting a wall of desperation in their quest for an American Dream. Like the new album, the show was stark and frequently gloomy; where just a few years ago Springsteen sang in praise of "Glory Days," past and present, he now murmurs, "Welcome to the new world order . . . No home, no job, no peace, no rest."

At the Chicago show, the dark subject matter didn't stop the ritual bellows of "Brooooooce!" in between songs, but Springsteen wouldn't have any of that; at the beginning of the set, the charismatic performer actually asked his fans *not* to sing along or cheer him on. "If you do," he cracked, "you'll be arrested by the state police."

"This music means a lot to me," he told them at the evening's end. And back in his dressing room—with a Ry Cooder movie soundtrack playing softly on a boom box—Springsteen leans back on a couch, clasps his hands behind his head, and explains why.

"It's different from anything I've done before," he says. "It's different than playing a few acoustic songs during the show. It's different than what I did during the early Seventies, when I was playing and it was just me. I don't know what kind of show we have. It's not quite a folk show; it's something else.

"It has a lot to do with cinema, maybe. It's just some different thing; I didn't know myself how different it was until I did it in front of an audience."

As Springsteen notes, playing the acoustic troubadour is hardly a new role for him—although the image of him clutching his woodgrain Fender Esquire is pretty indelible. But before *Time* and *Newsweek* crowned him rock's great white hope, before his future manager Jon Landau dubbed him rock and roll's future, Springsteen was in fact a denizen of Greenwich Village, the latest Next Dylan discovered by John Hammond for Columbia Records.

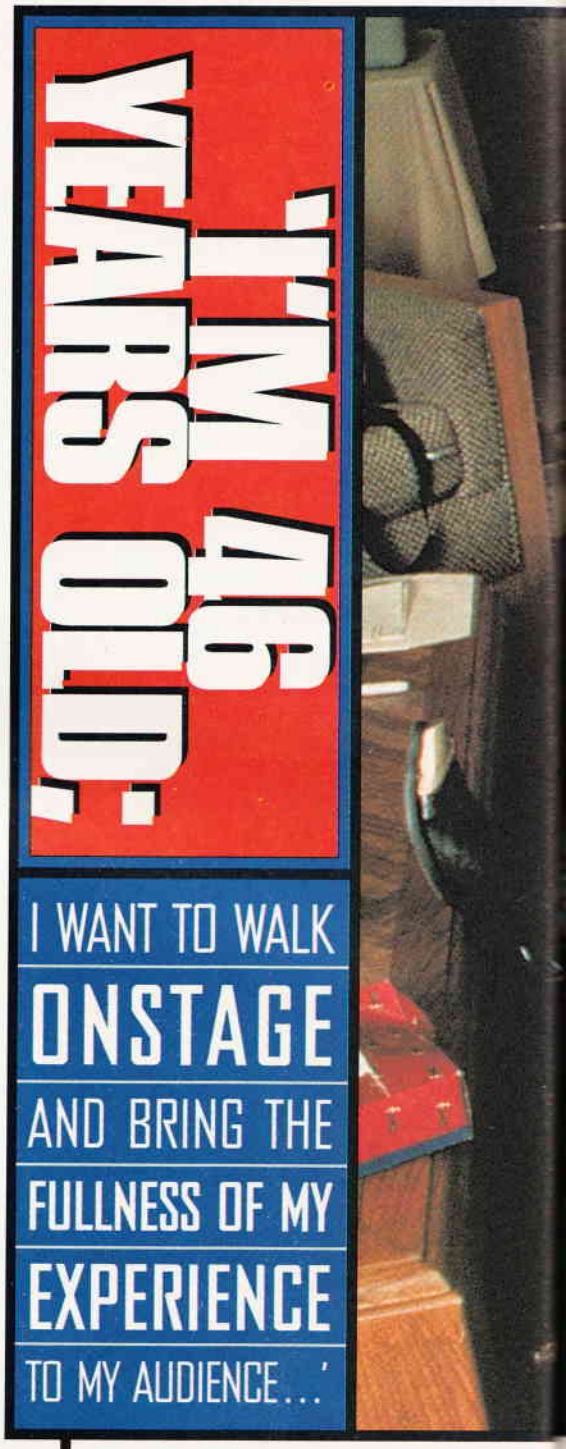
That side of him surfaced periodically in the course of his career. There was, of course, *Nebraska*, the brooding 1982 acoustic album that shocked most fans in the wake of his Top 40 triumph with the ebullient "Hungry Heart." Springsteen has also played acoustically at Neil Young's Bridge Concerts, and at the Christic Institute benefit in 1990.

"That was fun," says Springsteen of the benefit. "It was kind of like this, but half of that was kind of 'Thunder Road,' some other things. Right from the top I decided that I didn't want any of those things. It wasn't going to be 'Bruce Unplugged.' I knew I had to do something different, because I hadn't done it many times in the recent past."

The greatest surprise of Springsteen's new acoustic voyage was probably its timing. He began 1995 by snaring an armful of Grammys for his Oscar-winning hit, "Streets of Philadelphia." Then he brought out his *Greatest Hits* album with the really big surprise—fresh tracks that he had recorded with a reunited E Street Band. E Street mania dominated the year, right through the group's September appearance at the Concert for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, playing its own set and backing Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis. Springsteen also dueted that evening with Bob Dylan on "Forever Young."

But just as fans were about to start camping out for Springsteen and E Street Band concert tickets, he revealed his plans for *The Ghost of Tom Joad*.

"I worked with the band. I had a record



I did that was a personal type of record, and I didn't feel like I quite got it—it wasn't finished and it wasn't quite right," Springsteen says. "I think we were going to do 'The Ghost of Tom Joad' as a rock song for the band record. But as I got into it, all of a sudden, I began to—I had 'Straight Time,' 'Highway 29'—get into that groove, kind of film noir.

"So I started to write . . . and I said, 'That's the kind of record I think I want to make. I want to make a record where I don't have to play by the rules. I won't have any singles or any of that kind of stuff. I can make whatever kind of music I want to

ROAD WARRIORS:
Springsteen and his Takamine.

NEAL PRESTON

make.' I hadn't done that in a real long time; I guess I wanted to see if I could do it again. You don't really choose the voice you follow; you sort of follow the voice that's in your head. You're lucky if you find it. And once you've found it, you're supposed to listen to it."

The Ghost of Tom Joad is, in fact, a campfire album. The songs are dusty and sepia-toned; the only color is provided by harmonica and the occasional fiddle or pedal steel—and even those don't burst forward but rather rest quietly atop Springsteen's subdued acoustic accompaniment. Because it's a lyric-driven album, it's hardly a showcase for Springsteen's playing; mostly he favors subtle, almost offhand rhythmic picking that provides the songs with meter and only the most rudimentary musicality. It's closer to "Mary, Queen of Arkansas," from *Greetings from Asbury Park*, than the aggressive strumming of *Nebraska*'s "Johnny 99" or "Atlantic City." It's more Woody Guthrie than Hank Williams.

"A lot of it was me and an acoustic guitar, then putting the keyboards on," explains Springsteen, who recorded enough songs to make *Tom Joad* a double album. "The other stuff was cut live. I didn't want much more than that. It's all rough mixes; there's no eq on any instruments or any of the voices. There's no master on anything. We played it, then rough-mixed it in literally about 30 minutes. It's a little unusual; we tried to do all the other things—we tried to mix it, tried to measter it—and every time we did something to it, it made it sound more like a record and less like a living thing.

"We had kind of a variation of [*Nebraska*] going on. I guarantee you, [*Tom Joad*] will be the only record released this year that has no eq and absolutely no master."

Which serves the purpose of *Tom Joad* just fine. The album is about Springsteen's

characters—the homeless, the criminals, the migrants, the ex-cons, the unemployed, the drug-runners. All down and outers, they're hard people living hard lives—some by their own choice, some as victims of corporate or governmental neglect. Springsteen's hushed, folkie arrangements are essential for conveying their almost unrelentingly bleak circumstances.

Across the Rosemont dressing room, Bogdanovich looks at Springsteen and says, "It seems like the idea of Tom Joad, that whole thing, is somewhere in the air. You found it."

"It *is* in the air; it's all of what's out there right now," replies Springsteen. The songs were inspired by John Ford's film of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, which leads to a discussion of the movie.

"It's such an unusual film," Bogdanovich says, "Very tough, very dark. It's such a dark film for a major studio."

Springsteen nods in agreement. "That was something I always go back to, that movie," he says. "I looked at it again the other night; it's very tough. Incredible, really. I guess it was kind of unique for John Ford, too."

The album has other influences, too, including a series of books and articles Springsteen lists in the liner notes. He's written an introduction for a new volume of one of the books, *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass*, that inspired the *Tom Joad* songs "Youngstown" and "The New Timer."

If Springsteen's guitar playing seems secondary on the album, it gains prominence during his solo shows, in which the songs are delivered with greater vigor. The easy lope of the title track is more pronounced, for instance. With no other musicians onstage, Springsteen ups the volume on "Straight Time" and "Youngstown"—just a notch, but enough to really hear the sturdy rhythmic drive that's present but harder to detect on the album.

Of course, he goes to town on the older songs. "Darkness on the Edge of Town" is recast with a steady strum that recalls "Pinball Wizard." "Murder Incorporated" becomes more foreboding, with Springsteen's 12-string ringing with long, loud overtones. "Spare Parts" is stark and bluesy, while "Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?" is animated and exuberant. For "Streets of Philadelphia" he replaces the synthesizer drone with a coiled, halting guitar pattern that's just this side of percussive.

Then there's "Born in the U.S.A.," Springsteen's long-misunderstood anthem—"The songwriter always gets the last shot," he growls during the show—which he turns into a biting, vicious indictment with some stinging slide playing. After all, the blues can't be misunderstood.

"Yeah, it's the blues. That's just what it is," Springsteen says with a smile. "The funny thing is I cut the song for *Nebraska* originally; there's a version of it that's sort of like that, but didn't really work out. It was just electric guitar and voice. I'd like to hear it again now, see what I think of it. So this is kind of returning it a little bit to its roots, actually.

"I knew I wanted to do a show that was probably an hour and a half long, no more than two hours. With just one person and one guitar, anything shorter than that might not have been a full experience and anything longer than that and you've done it already. I just sort of broaden the theme with the other things, the older things; it doesn't interrupt the thread of the evening or where it's going. They just sort of broaden it out, bring in something different.

"These are versions I have of some of the older songs that feel closer to me . . . stripped down, completely what the songs are about. It's just very satisfying."

The acoustic show, Springsteen says, was put together during a week's worth of rehearsals in a theater in Los Angeles. "Basically I went in and played, just played almost the set that's there," he says. "I figured I'd start with 'The Ghost of Tom Joad' and see where it takes me." It was important, he says, that the show have "at least a little love and affection . . . and some laughs." But he balks at any notion that the album or the show are without hope.

"There's always something being revealed—something about them, something about you," he says. "Once you slip into somebody's story, you're having that experience. Once you get there, you're not sleeping at nights; you're up wondering, 'What's gonna happen to these guys? What's next?' You put on someone else's clothes and it's just fun being them.

"That's always exciting, even if the stuff is dark, even if there's tragedy involved, it's still exciting. The truth is always hopeful. It's always inspiring, no matter what it is. That's what I find, anyway."

He's asked about his earlier concerts, reminded of a past remark that he always performed each show as if it was his last. Is it the same thing when it's just him and an acoustic guitar?

Springsteen answers only after careful deliberation. "Not like that, no. I don't feel like that, really. That was a whole crazy thing we used to do; everyone has that side to them: 'Hey, I might die tomorrow!'

"That's an interesting question, though. My sense now is that I'm 46 years old; I want to walk onstage and bring the fullness of my experience to my audience . . . I believe that's what the show delivers, just life, living. I want to take all that, all that I can, and do my best to present it to you. In that sense, the stakes are high . . . because I have a commitment to it."

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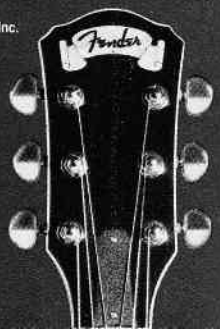


gentle hammer of the Gods

HOW JIMMY PAGE & Led Zeppelin TURNED THEIR BRITISH TRADITIONAL INFLUENCES INTO ACOUSTIC MAGIC.

BY Chris Gill

Led Zeppelin have long been considered the forefathers of blues-based heavy metal. As great fans of Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, Willie Dixon and other blues legends, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page liberally borrowed elements of American blues music and applied them to electric-guitar-driven rockers like "Whole Lotta Love," "You Shook Me" and "Bring It On Home." While the resulting sound only slightly resembled the music of their Mississippi Delta heroes, Zeppelin became permanently associated with the blues.

But there is another facet of the Zeppelin legacy, frequently overlooked, that merits close examination: its considerable body of acoustic recordings. Many Led Zeppelin albums feature a handful of tunes with acoustic arrangements, most of which bear the unmistakable imprint of British folk music. Long before *Unplugged* became a household word, the band's concert performances often included an all-acoustic segment during which Page fingerpicked a Martin D-28 and John Paul Jones strummed the mandolin neck of his triple-necked acoustic guitar. When Page and Plant reunited in 1994, 14 years after Led Zeppelin's breakup, to record the *No Quarter* album and go on tour, both album and concerts were predominantly unplugged affairs.

In many ways, Led Zeppelin's acoustic music reflects the profound influence that several important British folk musicians had on Jimmy Page. The guitarist himself has often acknowledged his particular debt to fingerstylist Bert Jansch and British folkie Anne Briggs. Many of Page's "secret" altered guitar tunings, which contributed a great deal to the character of "Kashmir," "The Rain Song" and "Bron-Yr-Aur," were actually employed well before the advent of Led Zeppelin by Jansch, John Renbourn, Martin Carthy and other exponents of British traditional guitar music. Page's solo acoustic guitar pieces, particularly "Black Mountain Side," are to a large degree slightly modified arrangements of British folk songs.

Considering the musical climate prevalent in England when Page was developing his playing style, the fact that Led Zeppelin were influenced by both blues and British folk music is not surprising. During the early Sixties, when bluesmen like John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters were touring England for the first time, many British musicians were rediscovering their own musical heritage. Traditional British artists and American blues acts often shared bills at music festivals in England, brought together under the folk umbrella by their shared classification as "folk music." Where contemporaries like Eric Clapton and Nick Drake latched onto *either* blues or folk, Page embraced both, creating a new musical genre in the process.

• • •

What follows is an historical/technical analysis of Led Zeppelin's acoustic-guitar-based recordings. The quality and scope of Jimmy Page's work in this sphere demonstrates that, for him, playing the acoustic was a labor of a whole lotta love.

THIS PAGE: BOB GRUEN / STAR FILE. OPPOSITE PAGE: JEFFREY MAYER / STAR FILE

Led Zeppelin

Page's acoustic guitar style was already in full bloom by the time he formed Led Zeppelin with Robert Plant, John Paul Jones and John Bonham in 1968. *Led Zeppelin*, released in 1969, features "Black Mountain Side," a solo acoustic performance by Page that he had previously recorded with the Yardbirds in 1967. Page's performance sounds heavily influenced by Bert Jansch's 1966 solo recording of "Blackwater Side," a traditional Irish tune. However, Page tuned his guitar to (from low to high) D A D G A D for both of his recordings of the song, whereas Jansch used a different tuning.

In addition to "Black Mountain Side," *Led Zeppelin* contains several other nods to British folk musicians. One clear example is "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You," which was originally composed by the relatively obscure folk artist Anne Bredon. Bredon was not given credit for her song until the release of the first Led Zeppelin box set in 1990—a short time after Bredon's son had heard his mother playing the song at home and asked her why she was playing a Zeppelin tune! In defense of Zeppelin, Page first heard "Babe" on a Joan Baez album, which credited the song as a traditional composition. Led Zeppelin gave the otherwise acoustic song a dynamic boost by transforming the chorus into a loud, electrified stomp.

BERT JANSCH, BRITISH TRADITIONALIST.

"Ultimately, I wanted Led Zeppelin to be a marriage of the blues, hard rock and acoustic music, topped with heavy choruses," Page told Guitar World in December of 1993. "Lots of light and shade in the music. 'Babe I'm Gonna Leave You' is a prime example of that."

Led Zeppelin III

Led Zeppelin's most folk-oriented album is *Led Zeppelin III*, long nicknamed "the acoustic album" even though the record includes several electric rockers. Page says that the album's emphasis on acoustic instrumentation was the result of its being recorded in a cottage at Headley Grange, a village in the English countryside. "We weren't crashing away at 100-watt Marshall stacks," Page commented in a 1977 *Trouser Press* interview. "Being in a cottage without electricity, it was acoustic guitar time."

"Bron-Y-Aur Stomp," a rollicking singalong, offers further evidence of Bert Jansch's impact on Page. The opening bars sound similar to a passage of Jansch's 1966 recording of "Waggoner's Lad," a traditional British folk song.

The record features a handful of songs that reflect Page's experimentation with alternate tunings, including "Friends," which is in C6 (from low to high: C A C G, C E), and "That's the Way," where Page tunes to open F# (from low to high: C# F# C# F# A# C#). The band recorded its own arrangement of the traditional tune "Gallow's Pole," a song that was often performed by Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter, singer/guitarist and composer of "Goodnight Irene," who was a pivotal influence on many blues and folk musicians.

"I first heard 'Gallows Pole' on an old Folkways record by Fred Gerlach, a 12-string player," Page told journalist Charles R. Cross. "I used his version as a basis and completely changed the arrangement."

Perhaps the most interesting cut on *Led Zeppelin III* is "Tangerine" [*see transcription, p. 61*], a song that reveals Page's interest in American country music and well as his folk leanings. This Page composition was originally recorded when Page was in the Yardbirds. On the song's intro, Page plays a folk-inspired, strummed and fingerpicked acoustic guitar part, then later overdubs an uncharacteristic (for Led Zeppelin) pedal steel part.

Untitled (Led Zeppelin IV)

Led Zeppelin's next record, the "untitled" fourth album, may represent the band's most effective marriage of the blues, hard rock and acoustic music, particularly the track "Stairway to Heaven," which became the ultimate Zep song. During the tour preceding this album, the band started performing extended acoustic sets in concert and collaborating with members of Fairport Convention, a British band that was inspired in equal measure by American and British folk artists. Led Zeppelin, using the name the Birmingham Water Buffalo Society, joined Fairport Convention onstage at Los Angeles' Troubadour club in 1970 when Fairport was recording a live album there. Zeppelin returned the favor by asking Fairport vocalist Sandy Denny to sing background vocals on "The Battle of Evermore."

The fingerpicked contrapuntal guitar part that kicks off "Stairway to Heaven" may be one of rock's enduring clichés, but it demonstrates Page's classical leanings as well as his folk roots. The fourth album's other acoustic masterpiece, "Going to California," is Robert Plant and Page's tribute to Joni Mitchell. Plant's lyrics and Page's acoustic guitar part are reminiscent of Mitchell's playing and singing on her album *Blue*, which contains a song called "California." Page would later describe his first meeting with Mitchell, in 1975, as one of the high points of his career.

Houses of the Holy and Physical Graffiti

While Zeppelin's fourth album may have been the band's most eclectic record, it also marked its movement in a heavier and more electric-oriented direction. Subsequent albums featured no more than the occasional acoustic-dominated track. *Houses of the Holy* has only one such tune, "Over the Hills and Far Away," although "The Rain Song," one of Page and Plant's most beautiful collaborations, was originally written on an acoustic guitar tuned (from low to high) D G C G C D. "Over The Hills" features a spirited acoustic performance by Page, who executes impressive Celtic-inspired pull-offs during the verses. The band's next album, *Physical Graffiti*, includes Page's solo acoustic guitar masterpiece "Bron-Yr-Aur," which was originally written during the *Led Zeppelin III* sessions. Page tuned his Martin acoustic to C6, the same tuning he used previously for "Friends." Except for "Boogie With Stu," a rollicking rockabilly sendup of Ritchie Valens's "Ooh My Head," featuring Page on mandolin, "Bron-Yr-Aur" was Led Zeppelin's final acoustic recording.

No Quarter

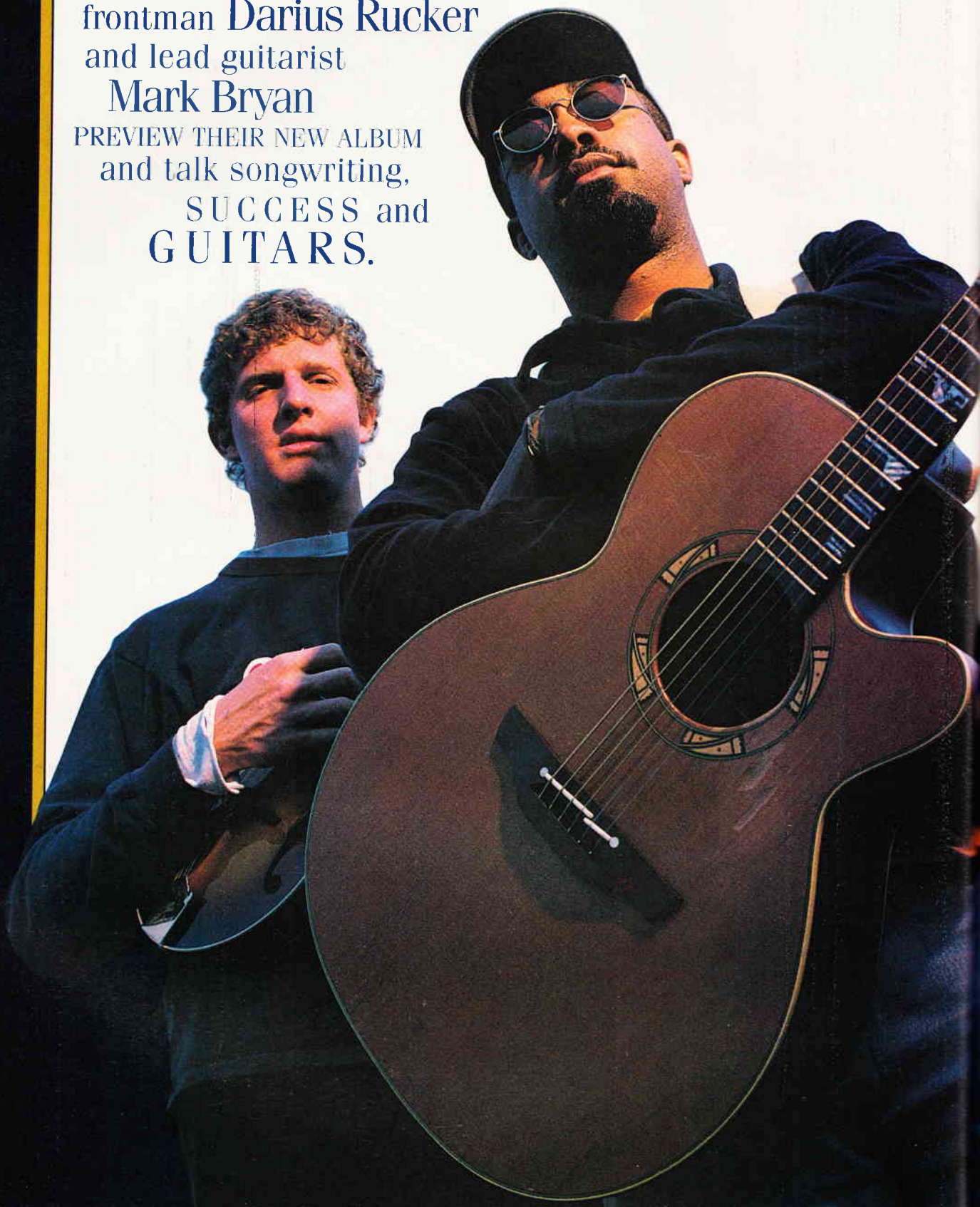
When Jimmy Page and Robert Plant decided to reunite in 1994 for MTV's *Unledded* special, the duo delved deeply into its folk roots once again, reworking several Zeppelin classics like "Kashmir," "No Quarter" and "Nobody's Fault But Mine" into acoustic guitar-driven masterpieces. Page played an Ovation 12-string on "Gallow's Pole" and "Four Sticks," breathing new life into Zeppelin's former glories. On a new song, "Wonderful One," Page revisited the F# tuning that he used for "That's the Way," on *Led Zeppelin III*, and, oddly enough, he tuned his guitar to open G (from low to high: D G D G B D) for a new version of "That's the Way."

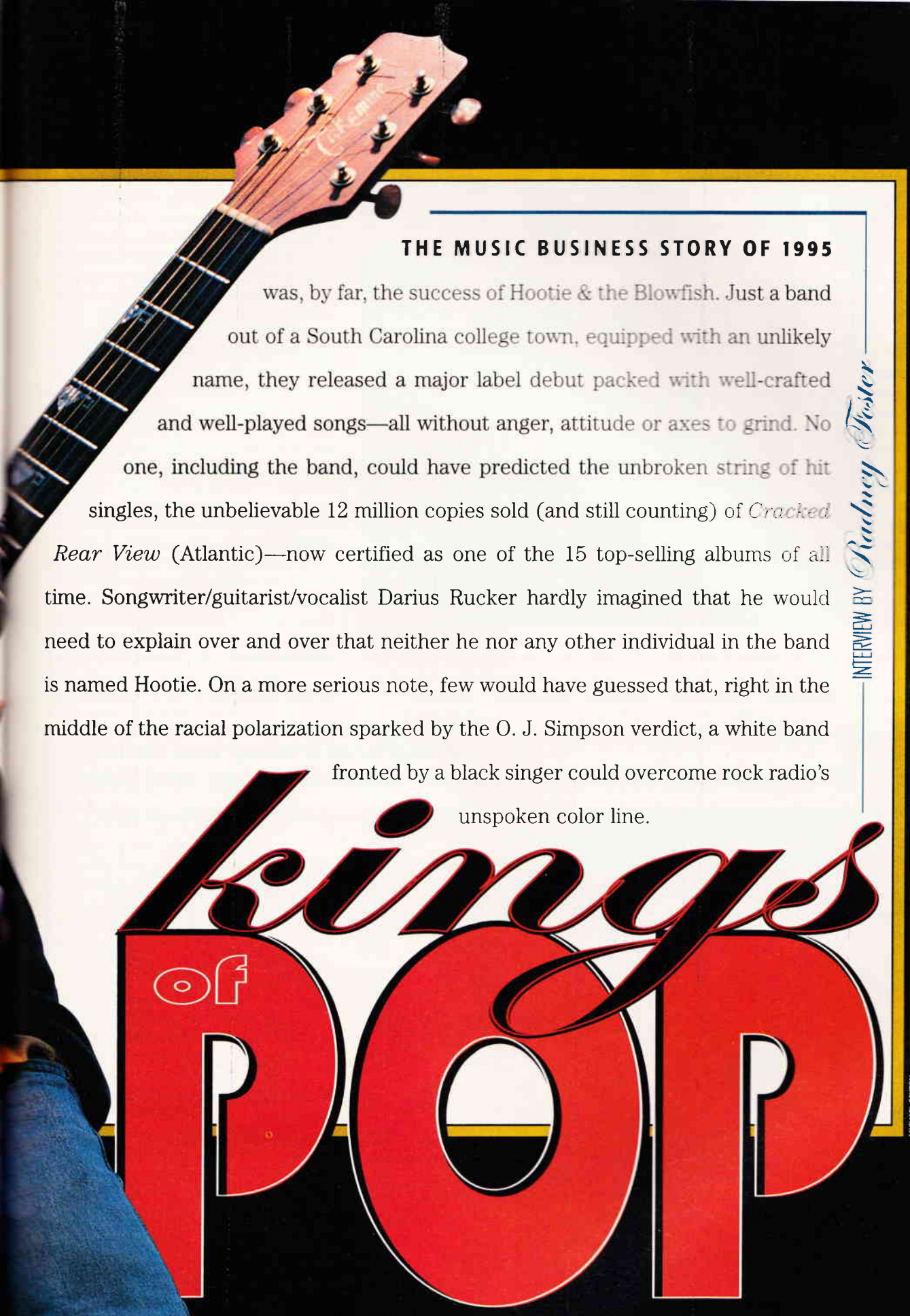
The duo's playlist on the tour to support the *No Quarter* album included acoustic arrangements of many overlooked songs from Led Zeppelin's past. Plans for a follow-up album and tour have already been announced. Certainly, the duo's renewed interest in acoustic folk music can be looked at in the bright light (and commercial realities) of today's unplugged revolution. But when one considers Led Zeppelin's substantial catalog of acoustic music, one is just as likely to ascribe a different motive to Page and Plant: love. GWA

DENNIS SOFRANKO/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

Hootie & the Blowfish

frontman Darius Rucker
and lead guitarist
Mark Bryan
PREVIEW THEIR NEW ALBUM
and talk songwriting,
SUCCESS and
GUITARS.





kings of POP

INTERVIEW BY Radney Foster

THE MUSIC BUSINESS STORY OF 1995 was, by far, the success of Hootie & the Blowfish. Just a band out of a South Carolina college town, equipped with an unlikely name, they released a major label debut packed with well-crafted and well-played songs—all without anger, attitude or axes to grind. No one, including the band, could have predicted the unbroken string of hit singles, the unbelievable 12 million copies sold (and still counting) of *Cracked Rear View* (Atlantic)—now certified as one of the 15 top-selling albums of all time. Songwriter/guitarist/vocalist Darius Rucker hardly imagined that he would need to explain over and over that neither he nor any other individual in the band is named Hootie. On a more serious note, few would have guessed that, right in the middle of the racial polarization sparked by the O. J. Simpson verdict, a white band fronted by a black singer could overcome rock radio's unspoken color line.

MICHAEL SEXTON

Rock and roll orthodoxy scorns any young band that is able to excite 40-plus-year-olds about music. While it may be trendy to dis Hootie (that is, the whole band) as uncool, there's no denying the universality of hits like "Let Her Cry," "Hold My Hand" and "Only Wanna Be with You," with their clean, soul-stirring hooks and Rucker's alternately smooth and gritty vocals. Rucker and lead guitarist Mark Bryan merged their classic rock sensibility with the alternative savvy of producer Don Gehman (R.E.M., John Mellencamp) to create the perfect sound for triple-A (adult album alternative) radio and video outlets. On April 23rd they will release *Fairweather Johnson*, their all-important follow-up album, and the smart money would say that no major changes are in store. But with normal guys like Hootie & the Blowfish, who can predict?

• • •

Guitar World Acoustic's interview with Hootie & the Blowfish guitarists Darius Rucker and Mark Bryan was conducted by their good friend Radney Foster, a former member of the popular country duo Foster & Lloyd and presently a solo artist whose most recent album is *Labor of Love* (Arista). One night in November of '94, Foster was asleep in bed when a friend called to say that Hootie & the Blowfish were performing on VH1, and Darius Rucker was wearing a Radney Foster t-shirt. Foster and the Hooties eventually played together a couple of times, establishing a rapport based on their mutual interest in music—specifically the Nashville-based singer-songwriter movement of which Foster is a leader, and which includes Nanci Griffith and Mary Chapin Carpenter. Hootie & the Blowfish used a live cover of Foster's "A Fine Line" as a B-side to "Let Her Cry," and regularly perform it as a part of their act. They plan on releasing the Foster & Lloyd tune "Before the Heartache Rolls In" as a B-side to an upcoming single. *—GWA Ed.*

ONLY WANNA BE WITH YOU
Darius Rucker (left) and Radney Foster

BETH GWINN

RADNEY FOSTER: Mark and Darius—you bust your butts for 10 years in the bars and then, all of a sudden, 12 million records sold and you're the biggest thing since peanut butter and sliced bread. Does it ever get scary?

DARIUS RUCKER: Yeah, it's scary. But I guess we haven't really fathomed the numbers that people put in front of us, because we're just so tired of *Cracked Rear View*. We're ready to put out another record, and we just think about that fact more than about what *Cracked Rear View* did. Don't you agree, Mark?

MARK BRYAN: Yeah. When you're just starting out, you're like, "Oh, my God, imagine if we were to sell a whole bunch of albums!" Then, once you do, you're kind of like, "All right, cool. Now, what's next?" And it doesn't seem anywhere near as big once you're there because you still feel like the same guy. We still feel like the same band; our relationship with each other and our fans is still the same, even though there's a hell of a lot more of 'em.

RUCKER: It's weird just going out to a bar or something and having it be a big deal. It's also funny, because no matter how many times it happens, you still go in these places and are surprised to have to deal with it.

FOSTER: One of the things that sets you guys apart is that you write *pop* songs. It's so rare these days to see a rock band try-

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ing to write things that are really in that straight-ahead pop-song kind of vein. When was the first time that you guys considered yourselves songwriters?

RUCKER: I think the first time I considered us songwriters was after we finished *Fairweather Johnson*, our new record, and writing and listening to it as it went along.

FOSTER: Really? So it was just recently?

RUCKER: Oh, yeah. I mean, I just don't think *Cracked Rear View* was our crowning achievement. We wrote those songs when we were young, over a period of years, when we were learning how to write songs. It's a good record and all, but I didn't think we were real songwriters until we went to the studio this time with what really amounted to just shells of songs. I know I was worried we were going to have to cut it off in the middle and say, "We gotta go write some songs!" But to be put in that position and then to have written the album that we wrote, that was the first time that I really felt, "Man, we really are songwriters."

FOSTER: So the majority of the new album was written in the studio?

BRYAN: Yeah. We mostly started writing the music individually, throughout the tour, and then kinda put it all together right afterwards. So what we had before entering the studio, basically, were, like Darius said, "shells" of songs.

FOSTER: Getting back to *Cracked Rear View*: Darius, did you generally come up with half-finished ideas—"shells"—or did you tend to bring in more or less finished tunes with all the lyrics, and then work on the arrangements with the band?

RUCKER: Well, "Let Her Cry," for example, was one I brought in intact, already written. Before we had the finished product the bridge was changed and more chords were added. I tend to write three-chord songs, and for "Let Her Cry," Mark had to add stuff to make it more interesting. [*laughter*]

As for "Hold My Hand," that song was pretty much all Soni's [drummer Jim Sonefeld]. He brought it in, I just changed some lyric ideas, and we worked on the structure. That guitar intro was actually an idea we all came up with, just sitting around trying to decide how to start the song.

BRYAN: I think it's good to feature Darius's voice at the top sometimes, just because there is an emotion to some of the songs that he's able to convey better with his voice than we could with the music. Then you let the music change the emotion of the song as it goes on. I've been listening to the song "When I'm Lonely," from the new record, and it struck me that Darius can really set a mood great. Once you have him doing the intro, the musician's job is easy. Just follow his mood.

FOSTER: It's really refreshing to see a band

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whose centerpiece is the acoustic guitar. That happens a lot in country music, but is really rare in rock and roll. Darius, who were your chief influences as a player?

RUCKER: I think really the people that influenced me the most on guitar were [bassist] Dean [Felber] and Mark. They showed me songs that I would play until I'd annoyed everybody else in our dorm. They were the guys who took the time to do that until I started figuring stuff out by myself. I never really thought of myself as a player, so I would just always try to mimic what Mark and Dean were doing. And then I just started to play really, really hard. [*laughter*]

BRYAN: Radney, I'm gonna tell you now, nobody plays acoustic guitar harder than Darius Rucker.

RUCKER: I break a lot of strings.

BRYAN: He breaks strings, and he has this Takamine that he's had for only about two years, and right where the pickguard would normally be there's . . .

FOSTER: A hole?

BRYAN: Yeah, it just stops and goes through. It's already got some Willie Nelson goin' on there [*a reference to the enormous hole on the face of Willie Nelson's Martin N-20 acoustic—GWA Ed.*]

FOSTER: Man, you play harder than I do, Darius. That's trouble. But I think that gives the music an unmistakable energy. Does it ever happen that the four of you in the band sit in a room together, just banging away at acoustics, coming up with song structures?

BRYAN: Yeah. I mean, that's basically how we write. It's not always the four of us, but we'll sit down with two or three acoustics, whoever's in the room, and work the songs out with just those guitars. And that's where the shells of the ideas come up. I'll sit there while Soni plays the chord changes of his new song, and then I'll develop my parts over that. And then if it translates to electric, which it does the majority of the time, that's great; if not, we'll try other things. Like, I've been playing a lot of mandolin; I think I'm on mandolin on four songs on the new album, a couple of which are acoustic. One's a ballad ["Tootie"], and the other one ["Earth Stopped Cold at Dawn"] features Nanci Griffith singin' with Darius on the choruses.

Some songs sound better kept acoustic, you know. They never get too different from the way they were when we sat down and wrote 'em in the first place.

FOSTER: Your electric playing, Mark, is exceptionally melodic—you don't rely that much on the cookbook blues riffs used by guitarists in a lot of rock bands. Do you initially write your parts on an acoustic guitar?

BRYAN: That melodic thing comes from the fact that I really want to sing—but can't. [*laughter*] What I do is, I hear melodies and put them on the guitar. I learned a few years ago about using octaves on guitar, how you can slide octaves around in whatever key you're in and make nice, fat melodies happen a lot more readily than by using one note at a time. And so I kind of adopted that style. A lot of jazz guys did that, and in rock, Paul Westerberg, from the Replacements, is one guy who played that way.

RUCKER: You know, Mark's playing just stems from his playing acoustics and sitting around and singing. He comes up with these great parts to go around my vocals. They sometimes sound like an echo to my vocal, like somebody put reverb on my vocal, but it's Mark's guitar. I think it comes from us playing acoustic together . . .

FOSTER: I've always thought that George Harrison is sort of the unsung hero of the Beatles, 'cause he just came up with so many intricate parts for those Beatles songs, rather than being sort of a designated terrorist, like Eric Clapton was. Mark, I really think that your forte is acting in that George Harrison mode, coming up with really great parts that fit the vocal, the melody, and the rest of what's going on in the song. It's pretty brilliant.

BRYAN: Well, for 10 years now, Darius and I have been playing together. It starts with just two acoustics and him singing, so instead of just strummin' what *he's* strummin', I gotta do something different, you know. When he was first learning to play,

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all I really knew was the stuff I was teachin' him, stuff like basic D and C chords. Since he learned how to do the chords, it's been my job to go ahead and learn how to do some other stuff. At this point now, I feel real comfortable coming up with parts around the vocals and stuff. It's not something I need to think about so much as it is just feel—you just start playing until you get something you like. I really enjoy it.

FOSTER: Darius, on "Only Wanna Be With You," you make reference to several Bob Dylan songs. Obviously, he's a songwriting influence of yours, and I was wondering to what extent other folkie and country singer-songwriters . . .

RUCKER: Oh, definitely. I think that on this new record—this is gonna sound funny, but this is the honest-to-God truth—and on songs like "Let Her Cry," from *Cracked Rear View*, I'm a lot more influenced by John Hiatt, Lyle Lovett, you . . .

FOSTER: . . . bless your heart . . .

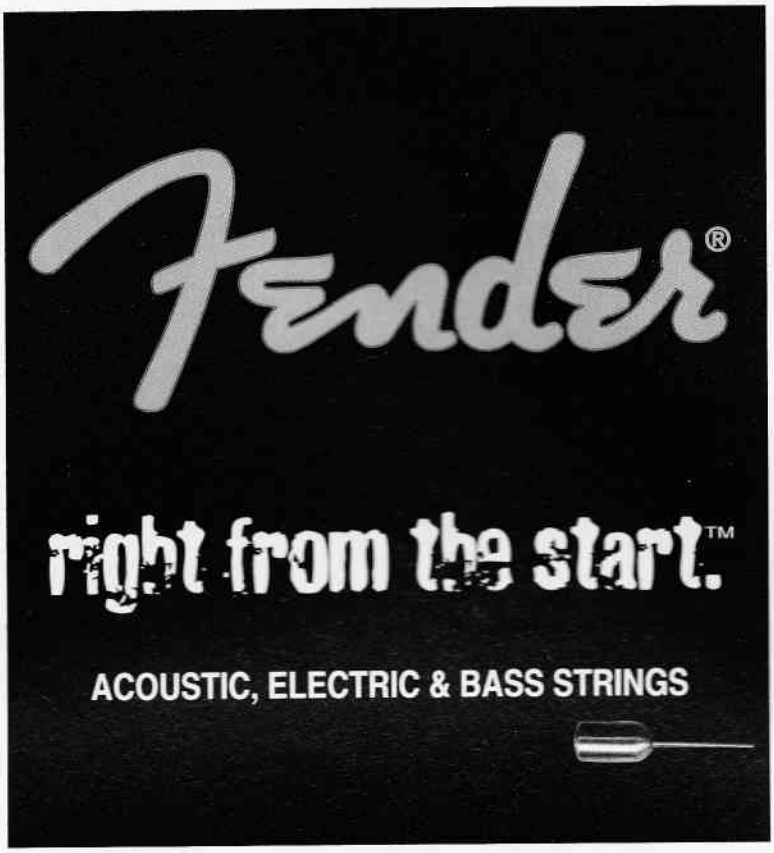
RUCKER: . . . and [folk singer] Nanci [Griffith]. People like that. Songs like "The Old Man And Me," off the new album, which I brought in, are straight country songs, 'cause that's what I listen to now. I listen to *you* guys [i.e., Radney Foster]. On the other hand, I'll put on an old Bonnie Raitt record, an old Stevie Wonder record from between '70 and '74, and earlier folkie stuff, old hippie kind of stuff from back then. That's what is influencing my writing now more than anything else.

FOSTER: When I first met you guys, I was really surprised to hear you talk about singer-songwriters like Hiatt. And I remember you had Jim Lauderdale, a country singer-songwriter out of Nashville, opening for you. I thought that your openness to country, and how much you guys are both influenced by and just enjoy acoustic-based music, was way cool.

BRYAN: Well, you should just hear what the B-sides for the new album are: "Before the Heartache Rolls In," by Foster & Lloyd [*co-written by Radney Foster—Ed.*], Don Dixon's "Renaissance Eyes," the Ravers' "Araby" and a Silos tune called "I'm Over You"—all heavily acoustic songs. So you're right, our music is based on a lot of acoustic guys, songwriters who just sit around with their acoustics and write songs. That's our background.

RUCKER: Yeah, that's just what we like to do. I'd love to get together with people like you and Nanci, John Hiatt and Don Dixon, just sit around some place and just play songs.

FOSTER: Darius, I know that right after your daughter was born, you asked me some questions about my four-year-old, and talked about how fatherhood had changed your life. Has it affected your songwriting? I know it's had a great impact on me.



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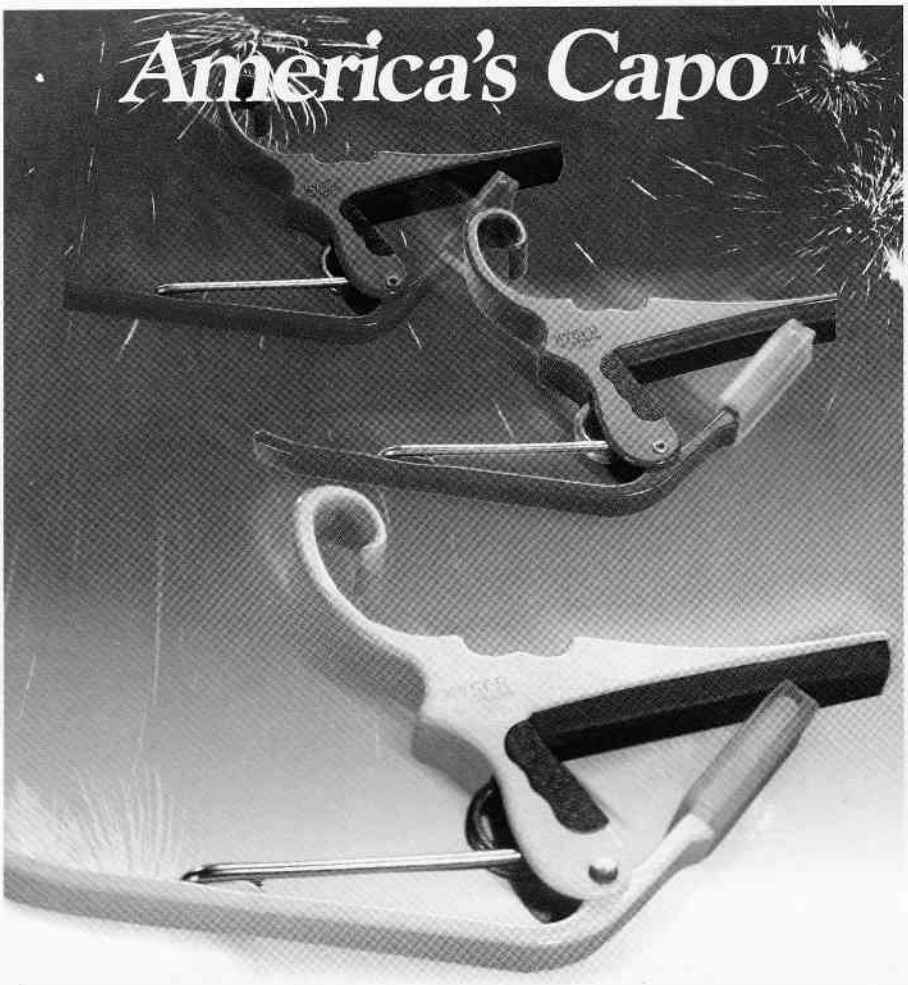

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RUCKER: It has just been huge. I think that was one of the last maturation steps, as far as songwriting goes, for me. After my daughter was born, there was like this big responsibility—you gotta grow up. And when you grow up, you don't wanna write "Only Wanna Be With You" again—not that "Only Wanna Be With You" is a bad song.

FOSTER: Sure. It's like the Beatles—there's something magical and wonderful about "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "Help," but they certainly progressed from there as songwriters.

BRYAN: Darius may not know this, but I think there's a lot of references to fatherhood on the new album. He might not see it, I don't know . . .

RUCKER: Oh, I don't see it, but if you say so . . . [*laughter*]

BRYAN: It's phrases like "Eyes like an infant," from "When I'm Lonely"—all kinds of little lines like that throughout the album. You might not have been always referring to your daughter but, at the same time, I think it's definitely become a central theme in your writing.

FOSTER: When I write songs, there's always a challenge to try to take whatever personal event I'm writing about and make it accessible. Darius, you have a great deal of not only your own personality but your personal experience in your songs, and, considering their success, they're obviously *very* accessible. Does that ever make you feel too vulnerable? Do you ever think about just where to draw the line with personal information in your songs? I know that "Let Her Cry," for example, was written around the time of your mother's death, and it seems obvious that a big part of the song is wrapped up in that. Is it difficult to open up that way to the millions?

RUCKER: It's odd. I'm the kind of person that doesn't talk a lot about his feelings. And then we put out an album like *Cracked Rear View*, and *every* song is a personal experience. I have wished that I didn't do that, but I realized on the new record that I have no choice. And you *do* feel real vulnerable, 'cause if people would really listen to what you were saying in a lot of songs, they would know you a lot better. There'd be a lot of strangers knowing you. And that's a wild thought. But I can't help but write about what I know, and the only thing I know is my life experience.

FOSTER: I've always felt that the only thing that I could do was write about my personal experiences. For me, it was sort of for sanity's sake. It's cheaper than therapy, so . . . [*laughter*] But at the same time, there is that scary part that asks, how do I convey this in such a manner that people don't really know the exact circumstances?

RUCKER: When I write, a lot of things happen subconsciously. Mark will corroborate this: I'll think I'm writing a song about one

thing, and then I'll listen to it a couple of weeks later and realize it was about something totally different.

BRYAN: That's because even if you try to write about something else—and this has happened to me—you can only end up writing about what you really know.

FOSTER: [*nods*] I wrote all of these pop love songs and country love songs on *Labor of Love*, my last album, and I didn't think it had anything to do with the fact that my marriage was falling apart. Now I listen to the thing and I'm like, "Good God! [*laughter*] You let the whole world know your marriage was falling apart!"

RUCKER: I'll be honest with you, we've been living with this new record for four months, and I just figured out what the first song on the record's about . . .

BRYAN: I still haven't figured that one out . . . [*laughs*]

RUCKER: It was so wild. It just came to me. I think that was cool.

BRYAN: I tell you, this new album goes a little deeper, Rad. Not that the first one didn't have some depth, but on this new one you've gotta dig a little deeper to find out what exactly we're talkin' about. It's just not as literal. And it's in a good way. I don't think it'll turn anyone away, I just think it'll make people think a little more, and I'm kind of excited about that.

FOSTER: Okay, I want to take a moment to ask a silly question. I know that when you were in college, you both wanted to be sportscasters. When you guys were in the third grade, what did you want to be when you grew up?

RUCKER: Pro basketball player.

BRYAN: I probably said pro football player.

FOSTER: So you both basically wanted to be jocks, and yet you've ended up in a band . . .

BRYAN: Because we weren't any good, man . . . [*laughter*]

FOSTER: In other words, if you could be [Dallas Cowboy quarterback] Troy Aikman, you would.

RUCKER: Oh yeah, exactly.

FOSTER: That's okay. If he could be you guys, he would, too. Darius, what was the first album you bought?

RUCKER: The first record I bought was Barry White's greatest hits on eight-track.

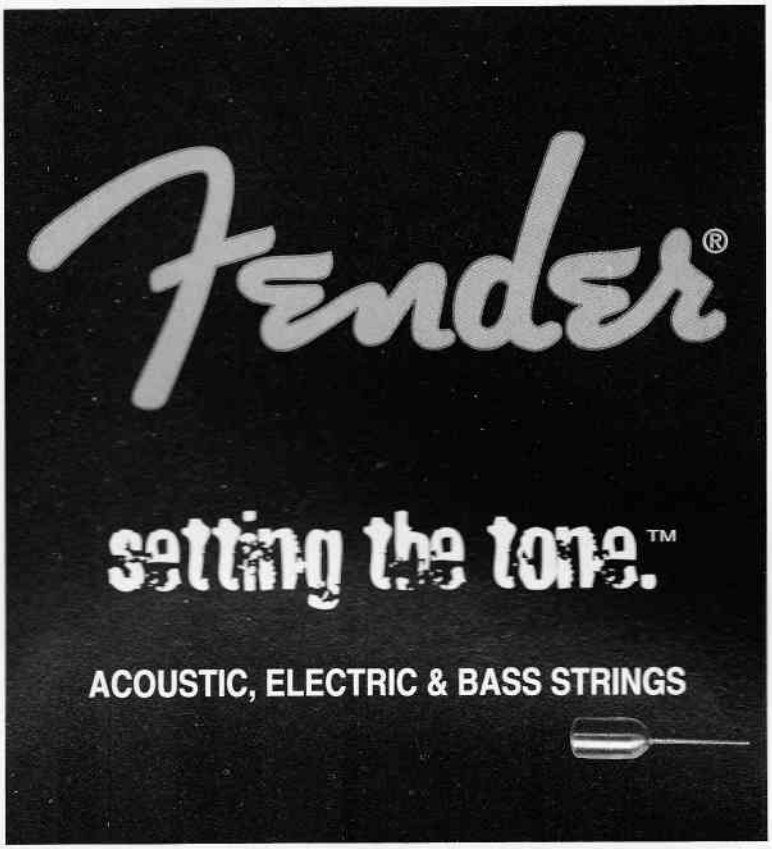
FOSTER: Nooo. Way cool. All right, Mark?

BRYAN: Remember *Convoy*, that country trucker compilation that was sold on television?

FOSTER: No! You didn't! Man, I love it. So you had a country influence from *way* back.

BRYAN: I'm pretty sure *Convoy* was the first album I bought with my own money, but I think that the first album I really got into was the *Jesus Christ Superstar* soundtrack. My mom used to play it all the time.

Continued on page 90



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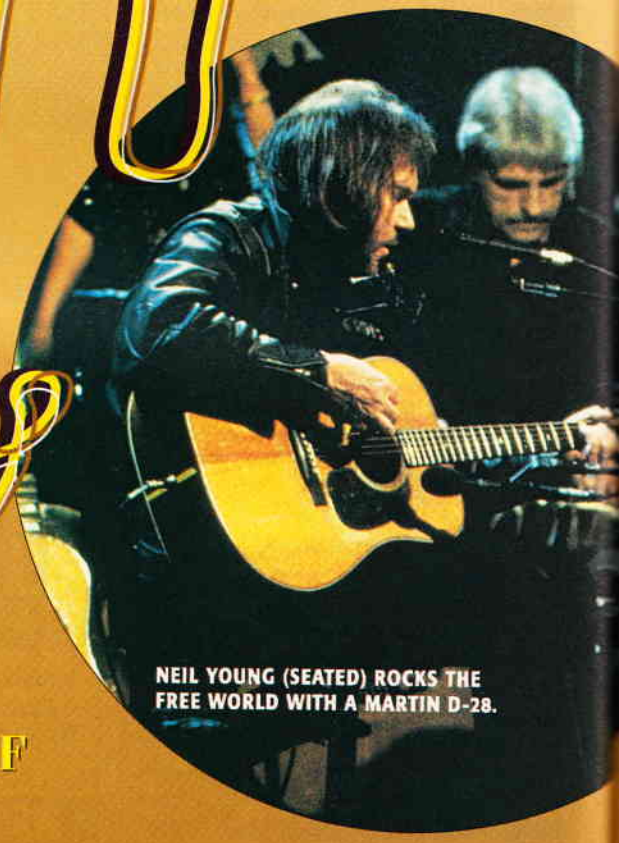

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF

mtv unplugged,

THE ACOUSTIC MIRACLE THAT CHANGED THE FACE OF ROCK AND ROLL.

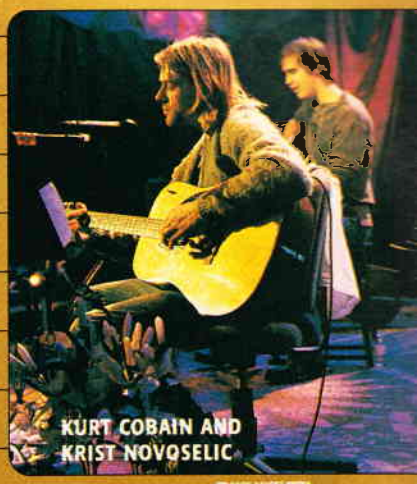
BY David Hinckley

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, success has inflicted terrible pressure on art.

In 1964, for example, the Ford Motor Company introduced the Mustang, which immediately became one of the coolest cars ever. The long, low and lean Mustang was nothing fancy—just the basics, really. But the basics with attitude and style. It quickly created a whole new automotive genre: the Muscle Car, vehicle of choice for guys and fine for chicks, too.

But the Mustang's success also sowed the seeds of its collapse. After three years with only minor modifications, Ford decided in 1968 to "improve" the Mustang. Make it bigger, give it more bells and whistles.

Trouble is, that meant the car started to lose its distinctive silhouette, and with that its lean cachet. The Mustang would never be the same again.



KURT COBAIN AND KRIST NOVOSELIC

FRANK MICELOTTA

Yet there have been cases where art survives success, and one of them is certainly *MTV Unplugged*, a certifiably cool institution which began six years ago as a modest little experiment in the basics and grew to become a flagship for live acoustic music in the unlikeliest of settings: a cable music channel built on highly produced and studio-processed promotional films for pop hits that were almost always electric and often wholly electronic in the first place.

Not for nothing was Music Television, early in its life, dubbed "Short Attention Span Theater." The typical MTV viewer was assumed to be a young adolescent who flipped on MTV while simultaneously doing homework, making phone calls and/or throwing a party. The typical MTV video was constructed on the premise that any screen image which lasted longer than three seconds would lose the aforementioned viewer. As further audience-retention insurance, video producers filled the screen with hunky guys and sexy chicks, some of them accessorized with chains. Videos were linked by chatter from "veejays" who made the cast of *Gilligan's Island* look like the Algonquin round table, and an in-depth story on MTV meant spending spring break with the college crowd in Daytona Beach.

MTV executives were never entirely happy with the portrayal of their viewership as refugees from a John Hughes movie, but it wasn't, in fact, very far from the truth. More importantly, this viewership comprised a lucrative demographic, since kids in the suburbs—where cable TV first became a way of life—were the dream audience for manufacturers of soda, sneakers, jeans and acne medication. So the unofficial MTV line on unflattering viewer stereotypes went something like this: "What's your point?"

It's important to remember all this when considering *Unplugged*, because any MTV show must be seen against the backdrop of what MTV was and has evolved into. It's a business, an industry, really, and however vast its influence on everything from popular music to the quick-cut sound-bite style of local television news broadcasts these days, its mission is to create programming that will attract the viewers its advertisers will pay money to reach.

This doesn't make MTV any different from CBS or The Discovery Channel. It does serve as a good reminder that MTV doesn't budget for *Unplugged* episodes just because past shows have captured some exceptional artistic moments, any more than it created *Yo! MTV Raps!* purely as a service for an artistic community underrepresented on mainstream radio and TV.

MTV underwrites *Unplugged* because it helps make MTV successful.

"There's a balance," says Alex Coletti, producer of *Unplugged*. "A lot of what motivates us is the fact that we are a TV station and we do need to get ratings.

"But on the other hand, that's never been the only consideration. If it were, we'd never have done Tony Bennett."

That is to say, the artistic legacy of *Unplugged* is real: it includes the most moving performance we have on tape of the late Kurt Cobain, a great Paul McCartney show, and so on. Also real are the dividends MTV has collected, and as *Unplugged* has become more successful, those dividends have grown. As the names on the guest list grow in stature, so does the attention drawn to MTV, and after being accused for a decade of boxing music up like fast-food hamburgers, MTV executives have to be enjoying the mountains of critical acclaim for *Unplugged*.

And did we mention that MTV also gets a cut from *Unplugged* CDs and videos?

> "I think, we've clearly contributed to a climate where acoustic music is more prominent."

Even fans of "serious artists" like Neil Young, Paul Simon, Sinead O'Connor and Bob Dylan, many of whom also dismissed MTV as the place where hair-video artists meet to trivialize rock and roll, were forced to acknowledge that whatever their objections—the rest of MTV is still trivial, this show was an ill-conceived grab for a younger audience, whatever—MTV had still provided this clean, uncluttered forum for the artist and his or her songs.

Artists themselves have expressed similar sentiments: the TV channel which built an altar to the video, that safest, most controlled of musical presentations, was now offering an antidote in the form of *Unplugged*, that riskiest of all shows: live performances with most of the safety nets removed.

Young was so uncomfortable with his first *Unplugged* taping that right in the middle he walked out of the studio. Coletti remembers chasing him down a snowy New York street in front of a startled group of fans.

"It was like, 'Which way did he go?' " recalls Coletti. " 'Okay, he went that-a-way.' "

In the end, says Coletti, "We got a show that we thought was very good. But Neil still didn't like it, so we re-taped it later when he felt better with the material and had Nils Lofgren along on guitar. This time everyone liked it."

Elton John, the second major artist to do *Unplugged* (after Don Henley), told Coletti that his *Unplugged* taping at Chelsea Studios in New York was "the first time in years I've actually seen my audience. Ordinarily, all I see are white spotlights."

Elton confessed to Coletti that the intimate setup initially made him a little nervous, but Coletti says the *Unplugged* team ended up making the bigger mistake.

"We were only doing half-hour shows then," he says. "So we'd ask performers to do five or six songs. But Elton was getting into it, and when he finished his half hour he said he was having a good time and could he do some more. And none of us had the sense to say, 'Hey, we've got Elton John here, let's keep going.' "

In most other cases, however, that seat-of-the-pants production approach helped give *Unplugged* its early vitality. Coletti and a small MTV team thought of artists whose music would have a different sound in an acoustic setting and asked them to show up and play. For the first *Unplugged*, Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook of Squeeze literally just walked into the taping room and started playing.

"It was so spontaneous that, as we finished the half hour, we realized we hadn't even planned an ending," says Coletti. "If you listen, they just keep playing, like a fade-out."

The show-up-and-play-what-you-want approach actually hasn't changed much since the first *Unplugged* in 1989, says Coletti, though the preparation process can at times be more involved. Paul Simon and Rod Stewart, for instance, had enough backup musicians to populate Colorado, so just setting up the stage was a long process. But then, Coletti says, the crew is "much, much better at doing this now" than it was in the beginning. "We've learned a lot, better people work with us, the equip-

ment is better."

He also says that as *Unplugged* has built a reputation, artists are more inclined to ask for opinions on what would work best. But still, he says, the preliminary process remains pretty basic: "I'll meet with the artists and explain what the show is about. I tell them they can't 'fix' things on the tape if they don't like a note, but that if they're unhappy with a song, we encourage them to redo it. What goes on the air is what they played."

Coletti admits that with certain artists he withholds his opinions unless they are requested. When Bruce Springsteen agreed to do an *Unplugged*, he says, "I'd been making up a set list in my head for about six months. All the old Bruce songs I thought would sound great acoustic. I had no idea if he'd do any of them, but I'd constructed a great show anyhow."

Then, a week before the taping, Springsteen called to say that with a new band and an electric tour coming up, he couldn't put an acoustic show together that would meet his own standards. Instead, he did one acoustic song ("Red-Headed Woman") and then an electric set comprised mostly of songs he would soon play on tour, from his then-new *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* CDs.

It turned out to be a great show, Coletti says. But after coming so close to working on *Unplugged* with Springsteen, all Coletti was left with was a hungry heart and a crumpled-up song list. "We'd still love for him to do *Unplugged* sometime. Maybe now that he's doing an acoustic tour, we've got a shot."

If the show's ability to attract the Dylans, Springsteens, Stewarts and Eric Claptons is its triumph, however, there are some who fear it could also be the quicksand into which *Unplugged* as we know it disappears—that it might make it increasingly difficult to carry on the show's modest, unpretentious original vision. By their very nature, stars of that magnitude create events, from the appearance itself to follow-up product like the hit CDs of Stewart, Mariah Carey, McCartney and others.

Events, of course, are a big part of what the music business is all about. Events create excitement and move product, and that's the name of the game. But *Unplugged* is an uneasy participant in the event biz, because "events" are precisely what *Unplugged* was created to neutralize—the whole point was to take the spotlight off the bells and whistles and refocus it on the music.

Asked a few years back if he would want Bob Dylan to perform on his radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*, Garrison Keillor said that, much as he loved Dylan, he wasn't sure he would, "because a performer of that magnitude might swamp our fragile little boat."

THE FIRST SHOW: SQUEEZE *UNPLUGGED*

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MTV isn't public radio, of course. But it isn't only hardcore acoustic music fans who figure that while plenty of shows can provide star vehicles, *Unplugged* offers the setting for a kind of artistry that's showcased almost nowhere else.

Coletti is well aware of that.

"The first thing we wanted to do when the show started," he says, "was build credibility. We wanted to present music in a way it wasn't heard anywhere else, and I still like to think that's what we're doing. We're not just about promoting an album, like doing *Saturday Night Live* or Letterman."

Yet at the same time it's not possible to ignore the ways in which *Unplugged* has become intertwined with the larger music biz commerce, nor would MTV want anyone to.

"I don't want to overstate our impact, but I think we've clearly contributed to a climate in which acoustic music is more prominent," says Coletti. "And a big part of the reason for that is we've shown that acoustic music doesn't have to be soft or wimpy.

"I also think we came along at the right time. There are cycles in music. We caught one. I also wouldn't claim any credit for Springsteen or Dylan doing acoustic material, because they were doing it long before we came along. But I think we've shown a larger audience that acoustic music can rock. Just because you don't plug in doesn't mean you can't have balls.

"When we started *Unplugged*, one of the hardest things was to find an acoustic bass. The only kind that seemed to be around were stand-up basses. Now manufacturers tell us that because of *Unplugged* they're designing more hollow-bodies and selling 60% more than they were six years ago. We're also told that acoustic guitar sales are up 50% and *Unplugged* is one of the big reasons."

Another measure of popularity, in TV as in automobiles, is

Coming Home

Behind the scenes at *Kiss Unplugged*.

by ALEX COLETTI

[On Halloween Day, 1995, Kiss made a historic reunion appearance on MTV Unplugged. The band's current line-up (guitarist Paul Stanley, bassist Gene Simmons, lead guitarist Bruce Kulick and drummer Eric Singer) performed the first portion of the set, and then Kulick and Singer traded places with original lead guitarist Ace Frehley and drummer Peter Kriss. After two songs by the classic foursome, Kulick and Singer rejoined the band on stage, and the six members of Kiss past and present triumphantly finished out the concert together. What follows is the inside story on how this show came to be.—GWA Ed.]

The idea of having a *Kiss Unplugged* was born, appropriately enough, in a Chicago strip club in May of last year, where I was having drinks with Tim Rosner, an old friend who does occasional production work with Kiss. He had recently returned from the Australian leg of 1995's Worldwide Traveling Kiss Convention, which, for those who didn't catch it, offered a walk-through museum of Kiss memorabilia, a Q&A session with the band, and a drum and guitar clinic, among other things. The highlight of each convention was an acoustic set, courtesy of Kiss, of predominantly audience-requested songs. The convention shows were the first-ever unplugged performances by Kiss.

I didn't need to hear much more to start fantasizing about having the band on *MTV Unplugged*. Tim got me a cassette of one of the Kiss Convention performances, and I returned to New York and started making noise about the concept in the MTV hallways. Surprisingly, the idea was well-received, so I flew to Detroit (Rock City) on July 22 to catch a convention first-hand and meet with the guys.

I had worked with Paul from time to time during his various guest VJ stints on MTV, and it was great to see him again. I sat with him and Gene and discussed the *Unplugged* scenario, delicately dancing around the "Ace and Peter issue." It was pretty clear to me that if we were going to do this thing, we had to do it right, which meant somehow featuring Ace and Peter along with the band. That was pretty much the consensus around MTV, too. However, the four original members of Kiss had not played together in over 15 years, since Ace and Peter had departed the band, and there was no guarantee that a reunion could come off.

As things happened, the Ace/Peter thing wasn't really an issue at all. For whatever reason, Gene and Paul wanted the reunion to happen as much as we did. In fact, when Peter had attended the Los Angeles convention in June, Eric had welcomed him onto the stage to join the band for "Hard Luck Woman" (footage of which will be included in the recently released *Kiss Unplugged* home video). Meanwhile, in July Peter was on tour with Ace, who, it turns out, was now on pretty good terms with the band. Our great Kiss reunion was set.

Besides planting the seed for the *Unplugged*, the Kiss Conventions were a great way for the band to road-test material in an acoustic format. On the other hand, Kiss' acoustic convention sets were pretty "plugged" by our standards—stomp bopxes and amps were used—so much work was required to get the *Unplugged* show together. To that end, we entered S.I.R. Rehearsals in New York on August fifth, just four days prior to the taping, to get the thing ready for the cameras.

S.I.R.'s main room is a big white sound stage in midtown Manhattan. We've rehearsed many *Unplugged*s there, and Kiss (and just about every other band in the world) has played there at one time or another. The atmosphere was relaxed, and the MTV crew was at every rehearsal, which helped us work out camera placement, direction, lighting, etc. We used tape to mark out the area of the MTV stage onto the floor, so the guys would get used to working in such a small space. I knew Bruce was going to have the toughest time; at the conventions, he'd played a Chet Atkins SST, which isn't really a true acoustic. It took a lot of trial and error to find a guitar he was comfortable with, but he finally went with an Ovation that S.I.R. had on loan. Gene also looked at several acoustic basses before settling on a black Kramer. Luckily, I had an identical one at home that he used as a back-up.

The rehearsals generally ran six hours per night—the first four with Bruce and Eric, the last two hours with Ace and Peter. The set list was already taking shape, mostly based on the requests at the conventions. There was some concern that Gene wasn't singing enough songs, so "See You Tonite," from his solo album [*in 1978, the members of Kiss all simultaneously released solo albums—GWA Ed.*] was added.

Ace and Peter arrived on time, and there were hugs and smiles all around. We sat down and ran through the *Unplugged* drill, discussing everything from miking techniques to stage entrances. It was weird at first for Bruce and Eric to put down their gear and become spectators, but you could tell they understood the importance of what was taking place and were enjoying it. Ace was originally going to do "Shock Me," but, much like Bruce, he was rapidly discovering the limits of what you could do on an acoustic. He also tried "New York Groove," but "2,000 Man" was the clear winner. Peter was obviously going to do "Beth," but what I'd forgotten was that since the original recording was made with piano and strings, none of the others had ever performed the song.

Paul actually had it down, so he worked it out with Ace while Gene came up with a bass line. Peter, who'd been performing the song nightly with his new band, had planned on using a percussion box he'd gotten from Gene years earlier throughout the song, but I felt it made his singing stiff, so he wound up performing without it for the show. "Nothing to Lose," featuring all six members, was always effortless. (I even snuck behind the piano during rehearsals to pound out the chorus riff, and the sneaky sound guy miked it up for the guys to hear.)

The first night with Ace and Peter was a real thrill. Seeing the four of them together for the first time in 15 years, without makeup (another first), and being in some small way responsible for this was a trip. Peter and Ace got along great with Eric and Bruce, and Gene and Paul were like proud parents, beaming at the sight of the entire family together under one roof. It was a very warm, genuine vibe that we eventually captured on camera.

the knock-off factor, and both the word "unplugged" and its musical manifestations are common sounds these days. Last October, Foundation Records released a posthumous collection titled *Liberace Unplugged*, perhaps the first time that phrase has been applied to Liberace's music rather than his candelabra.

On a more rocking note, the Rolling Stones went acoustic in November with the *Stripped* collection. The Stones didn't learn about acoustic music from MTV, but they are far too savvy not to have noticed the popularity of *Unplugged* shows and CDs by other rockers in the Stones demographic, like Clapton and Stewart. In fact, Stewart's *Unplugged* session was guided largely by his old partner, and current Rolling Stone, Ron Wood.

There were exploratory discussions about the Stones doing *Unplugged*, says Coletti, but the band finally decided to do its own, apparently for two reasons. First, the tracks for *Stripped* were recorded over several months at a variety of locations, some studio and some live, thus giving the Stones as much time as they needed to assemble the record they wanted rather than having to get it all down in one or two sessions. Second, and this shouldn't surprise anyone, the Stones were willing to gamble that they didn't have to cut MTV in on the take. That is, heavy MTV promotion wouldn't move enough additional copies of a CD or video to offset MTV's cut.

Coletti admits he's disappointed the Stones didn't go with *Unplugged*. "The discussions that took place were between the Stones' people and our people," he says. "And they all concerned ancillary issues like CDs. I think if we had been able to sit down directly with the band and have a creative discussion, we could have explained what we could do for them and it might have happened."

But he's not mad, he says. "Hey, MTV doesn't own acoustic music. We'd love to have them come do our show, too. Any time."

That puts the Stones on the "A" wish list, along with Springsteen, Prince, Michael Jackson and a handful of others. In general, however, as *Unplugged* gets more successful, its wish list gets tighter.

"It is harder to get on the show now if you're not a household name," says Coletti. "We are budgeted for only a certain number of shows a year, and when you can get a Bob Dylan, it's hard to justify taking a show away from him and giving it to someone else."

That MTV wouldn't budget for more episodes of a hit program might seem strange. But live music, even acclaimed live music, is competing for dollars with *Spring Break* and other sociocultural features like the *Real World* series, all of which MTV considers just as important. The *Unplugged* budget is strict enough, Coletti says, that Neil Young could not have done his retaping if his record company hadn't kicked expense money in.

So the *Unplugged* waiting list grows, and some artists who might seem like naturals will very likely never make it.

"Personally, I'd love to do the Kinks or Richard Thompson," says Coletti. "But we're also serving an audience, and our audience would rather see Green Day than the Kinks."

In fact, according to Coletti, some of the bands who played early shows—the Church, the Indigo Girls—would probably not get an invitation today. "The way for artists like that to get on the show now is to have other artists pull them along," he says. "Like Nirvana bringing the Meat Puppets on. We wouldn't have had them alone."

> "Just because you don't plug in doesn't mean you can't have balls."

Some fans, particularly guitar-music fans, find this somewhat frustrating, especially when slots still are found for a hip-hop artist like Coolio, scheduled as one of the first 1996 tapings.

"It's because of his hair," jokes Coletti. "No, seriously, diversity is very important to this show. We shied away from rap after the L.L. Cool J show in 1991 because we figured, 'What else could be that powerful?' Now it's time to revisit, and we think Coolio will work. His lyrics hold up outside the music, and he's got a kind of gospel feel."

Certainly a Coolio show underscores Coletti's determination that *Unplugged* never be seen as a production that turns rockers into folkies. Since the alumni list includes hip-hoppers, R&B singers, Tony Bennett and three shows worth of spoken-word artists, that point now seems inarguable—even if there's still an occasional question about exactly what a spoken-word artist is unplugging.

"It's not as important now what artists unplug from," Coletti says. "What's important is the result. A lot of people thought Tony Bennett was a novelty, but anyone who really listened got one of the best shows they'll ever hear."

On the other hand, Tony Bennett even more than the Kinks or Richard Thompson is an anomaly for the MTV audience, and Coletti says he doesn't expect further shows in that style. No Mel Torme, no Rosemary Clooney. There was talk a few years back of asking if Frank Sinatra wanted to do an *Unplugged*, and Coletti says the Bennett show was "a kind of unspoken admission we wouldn't be doing Sinatra."

Frank Sinatra on MTV is a vision that doesn't register easily. But then, in 1988 the same could have been said for an acoustic night on MTV with Aerosmith or Rod Stewart. So now that such productions have become a norm, the question changes: After you've had McCartney, Dylan, Clapton, Stewart, Elton John and so on, who can you bring on next?

Few music shows of any style have lasted six years on TV, and the most ambitious ones have often burned out fastest. The mid-Eighties Cinemax Sessions series did several terrific stripped-down shows, notably a classic with Carl Perkins, Dave Edmunds, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, but within three or four years it had run its course. Coletti's personal inspiration for *Unplugged* was itself a one-shot: "Elvis," the 1968 Elvis Presley comeback special.

Unplugged has doubtless extended its life span by its willingness to embrace a range of artists. The gamble is whether that reach has become so wide that a new void has developed where the *Unplugged* used to be. If that's the case, a new production could come along—but it would be very unlikely to have the in-home reach and promotion power MTV can put behind *Unplugged*.

Besides, Coletti points out, a new show would change just as inevitably as *Unplugged* has changed. "A show like this becomes what it becomes," he says. "You can't fight it. You can't control it, either. You can only try to steer it."

Success, he says, "ups the stakes. Now you do hear some artists talking about how *Unplugged* could be a big thing for them, could be the next album.

"That's different from what we first set out to do—and I don't like that pressure. Sometimes I look at the show now and I think to myself that someone should unplug it.

"But then a Melissa Etheridge will come along and bring it back to where it was. I think we're still doing it right."

strum TOGETHER

HOW TO PLAY Beatles-style ACOUSTIC GUITAR, WITH ARRANGEMENTS AND CHORDS TO SOME OF THE BAND'S MOST MEMORABLE SONGS.

BY Askold Buk

THOUGH THE BEATLES ARE UNIVERSALLY CELEBRATED AS PROLIFIC, profound songwriters, they are less commonly recognized for their recording innovations. And yet, arguably, it was the Beatles who almost single-handedly redefined the studio process.

Before the Beatles made their mark, popular bands of the day used the same instrumental lineup (usually a couple of guitars, bass, drums and maybe a sax or keyboard) for live playing as they did for recording. Although the arrival of multitrack recording enabled musicians to layer different parts onto tape, few artists actually took advantage of this—most simply recorded, track by track, exactly what they played live.

The Beatles changed all that. Along with the Beach Boys, they realized the enormous creative potential of the studio; with their ideas (and producer George Martin's able guidance) anything and everything became possible. All of a sudden, the Beatles weren't limited by their own original instrumental lineup of John on rhythm guitar, Paul on bass, George on lead guitar and Ringo on drums. Multi-tracking and overdubbing enabled each Beatle to play whatever instrument he felt would best help realize his vision of the song.

Throughout their career, the Beatles took advantage of the textures and colors offered by a host of instruments not commonly associated with rock and roll, from the orchestral (strings, horns) to the exotic (the Mellotron, sitar and tabla). Ultimately, however, no instrument added as much color and texture to their tunes as the tried-and-true acoustic guitar.

From the very beginning, the Fab Four used acoustics on rhythm tracks, most notably on "Please Please Me" (their first British hit) and "This Boy." But as the band's career progressed, the acoustic guitar gained greater prominence in their compositions and arrangements. It wasn't too long before John, Paul and George started to employ the gamut of techniques and applications specifically associated with the acoustic guitar, such as using capos, de-tuning and Travis-picking. This, in turn, produced some of the Beatles' most memorable motifs, riffs and solos.

The melancholy "And I Love Her" was the groundbreaker. The first Beatles tune to feature soloing on the acoustic guitar, it helped dispel their image (at least in the United States) as lightweight, if lovable, mop-tops who strummed their guitars while singing "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

DAVID REDFERN / RETNA LTD.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TERENCE SPENCER / CAMERA PRESS / RETNA LTD; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES; FELIX COLLECTION / STAR FILE; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES; FELIX COLLECTION / STAR FILE

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

Interestingly enough, "And I Love Her" was originally recorded with more of a rock-and-roll approach—the intro was simply strummed chords, and George played the rhythm guitar parts and the solo on an electric 12-string. The Beatles wisely chose to soften it up by using only acoustic guitars, giving it a rhumba feel, and adding George's signature single-line nylon-string intro, similar to **FIGURE 1**. The repeating four-note motif in the intro is, harmonically speaking, deceptively simple—because each of the four notes is common to both the F♯m and E chords, their harmonic relationship to each chord is different. For example, C♯ functions as the fifth of F♯m and the sixth of E. Yet this is totally pleasing to the ear because it hears the same melodic contour repeated over and over.

George also played arpeggio figures like those in **FIGURE 2** over the verse. Notice how he superimposed a C♯m arpeggio (C♯, E, G♯) over the E chord, creating an E6 sound. The stunning melodic solo, not unlike **FIGURE 3**, played on nylon-string as well, is very similar to the original version, which means that it was probably worked out instead of improvised. No matter—it's brilliant, and must be played note for note in order for the song to sound legit.

Another early Harrison highlight is the intro to "I've Just Seen a Face," where he overdubbed ascending diatonic thirds and fourths played on a nylon-string over ascending diatonic sixths played on an electric, similar to **FIGURE 4**. The result is a dense melange of unpredictable, double-stopped triplets resolving to a straight 4/4 groove. Try learning each part separately first. That way, you can see how George was thinking as he laid down each part.

John, though often underrated, was a brilliant acoustic rhythm guitarist. Early on, one could see the development of his distinct style on the intro to "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party." Notice how John played a descending bassline between fairly simple chord voicings, as in **FIGURE 5**. This is a move he probably borrowed from folk guitarists, who use it to get more harmonic movement when accompanying themselves. On this cut, you can hear John exploring the more rudimentary possibilities of a moving bassline. Later on, a more musically mature John realized the full impact of this approach and used it to great effect on tunes such as "Norwegian Wood" and "Dear Prudence."

As the Beatles progressed as a band, it became more and more clear that Paul was developing into a musical heavyweight. Not only were his compositions becoming increasingly sophisticated, but his instrumental prowess was also crystallizing to the point where if none of the other Beatles could play what he envisioned, he sim-

ply played it himself. The first inkling of this appeared on the recording of one of the greatest ballads of all time, "Yesterday."

So brilliant is "Yesterday" that Paul himself wondered if he had perhaps unwittingly "borrowed" it from another tune. It also marked two Beatles firsts: none of the other band members played on this recording (Paul simply accompanied himself on acoustic guitar), and a string quartet was later overdubbed to fill out the sound.

Although "Yesterday" [*see transcription, p. 66*] is in the key of concert F, Paul tuned the guitar down a whole step (from low to high: D G C F A D) to enable him to play it using the more friendly fingerings in the key of G. He played the bass notes with his thumb and brushed the remaining notes with his fingernails. In the second bar of the bridge (**FIGURE 6**), notice how he used *contrary motion* (two notes moving in opposite directions) to outline the Em-D-C change. Try playing the bass note with your thumb and the melody note with either your middle or ring finger.

The recording sessions of the classic *Rubber Soul* marked the first time that the Beatles used capos to record tunes (Paul even tried a capo on his bass). Though originally written as a spoof of a "typical" French tune, "Michelle" nonetheless proved to be one of Paul's most beautiful ballads. He performed it on an acoustic guitar capoed at the 5th fret, enabling him to play the song (which was written in concert F) using fingerings as if it were in the key of C. The intro, not unlike **FIGURE 7**, begins on an Fm chord played with a chromatically descending bottom voice: root-7-b7-6 (F-E-Eb-D). This simple yet powerful bass movement can be found in many other tunes as well, including Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven."

The verse's chord progression (**FIGURE 8**), which showcases Paul's jazzier influences, is a testament to his growth as a musician. The Bb7#9 chord adds tension (you can hear the natural third if you listen closely), and the ascending diminished chords are more Django Reinhardt than rock and roll.

John's acoustic contribution to *Rubber Soul* is the haunting "Norwegian Wood" (originally titled "This Bird Has Flown"). John capoed his guitar at the 2nd fret, where he worked off the open D shape. The main motif, similar to **FIGURE 9**, is a sophisticated continuation of the moving bassline approach he explored on "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party." This time around, however, instead of simply playing a descending bassline, John crafted a melody on the lower voice that weaves in and around the static D chord. Notice that at this point he started using hammer-ons to give more articulation to the riff. Play this part with a pick (the way John did), and

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

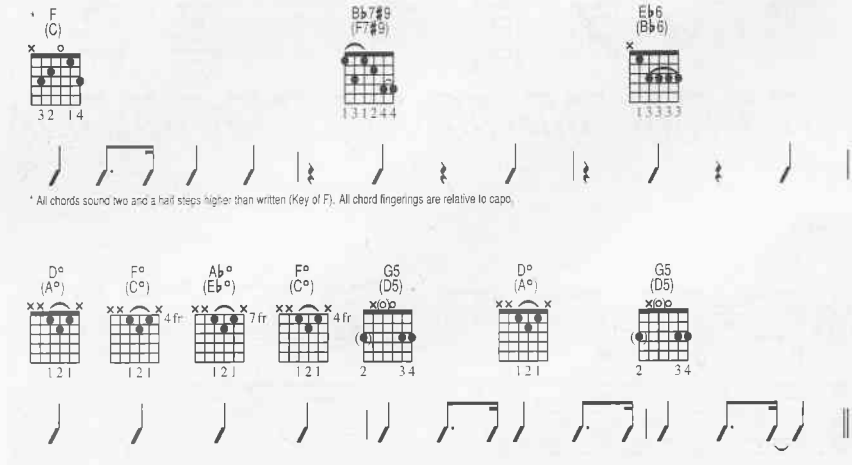
FIGURE 7

With capo behind 5th fret

* All pitches sound two and a half steps higher than written (Key of F). All tablature positions are relative to capo.

FIGURE 8

All chords played with capo behind 5th fret



* All chords sound two and a half steps higher than written (Key of F). All chord fingerings are relative to capo.

FIGURE 9

* With capo behind 2nd fret

* All pitches sound one whole step higher than written (Key of E). All tablature positions are relative to capo.

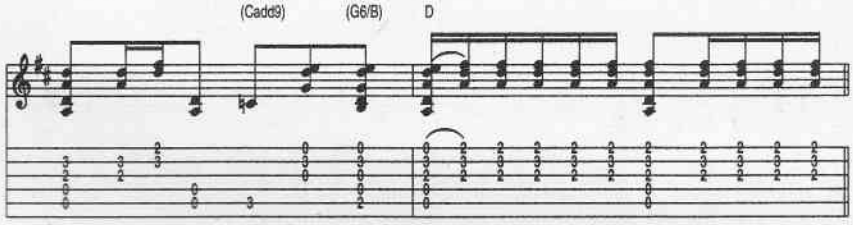


FIGURE 10

FIGURE 11

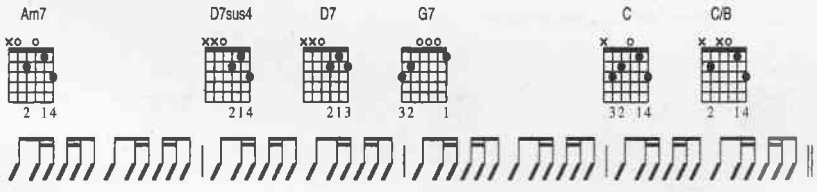


FIGURE 12

pay attention to playing the melody notes cleanly while holding down the D chord shape. Once you get that, you can fill in the chord strums.

By the time *The Beatles* ("The White Album") was being recorded, the Beatles, for all intents and purposes, had stopped working as a band. They would work individually on tunes, bringing in the other members only to fill in whatever parts were needed. That didn't stop them from writing brilliant tunes, however. Accompanied only by his acoustic guitar and a metronome, Paul recorded yet another classic, the gentle "Blackbird." It took him 32 takes, but the end result is a masterpiece of voice-leading. Employing nothing but two-voice chords (usually played as tenths on the A and B strings), with the open G string ringing throughout, Paul created chromatic movement (similar to **FIGURE 10**) that would rival that of the most serious classical composer. Paul probably used his thumb to play the low voices and the open G string and his middle finger to execute the high voices (sort of a faux Travis-picking style), but you should experiment with whatever's comfortable for you.

Another acoustic showcase for Paul on "The White Album" is the whimsical "Rocky Raccoon." Though the chords are fairly simple (**FIGURE 11**), there is one interesting point of note: Paul voiced the high G note on top of every chord but two—the D7 and G7—throughout the progression.

It was also during this period that John Lennon developed as a bona fide acoustic fingerpicker. His inspiration came from an unexpected source, which he had to travel thousands of miles to find. It all began when the Beatles flew to India to study the teachings of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Though John quickly grew disenchanted with the Maharishi (his "Sexy Sadie" is about his all-too-enlightening experience with the guru), he did find an unlikely tutor in British pop star Donovan (of "Mellow Yellow" and "Sunshine Superman" fame), who'd also come to see the guru. Donovan turned him on to some basic Travis picking, particularly a pattern (**FIGURE 12**) which sees the thumb play an alternating bassline (usually the roots with fifths and/or thirds) on the strong part of the beat and the rest of the fingers playing the melody notes on the weak (or syncopated) part. The only time the bass and the melody notes are played together are on the downbeat of the first and third beats of the measure.

John must have practiced a bit in India, because upon returning to the studio to record *The Beatles*, he wrote three of his most brilliant songs ("Dear Prudence," "Julia" and "Happiness is a Warm Gun," which was performed on an electric but

adapts perfectly to the acoustic), all completely based on the pattern taught him by Donovan.

"Dear Prudence" is arguably John's greatest achievement as a guitarist. Using a "dropped-D" tuning (D A D G B E), he established a heavy drone in D (alternating D, the root, with A, the fifth) at the outset, over which he layered descending modal triads, similar to those used in **FIGURE 13**. The trick to playing this correctly is holding down the chords while maintaining the constant right-hand fingerpicking pattern. Let the notes ring into each other, and by all means don't break the hypnotic quality of the alternating bassline. John ends the tune on this motif as well. If you listen to Bon Jovi's intro to "Wanted: Dead or Alive," you'll hear a very similar pattern that was no doubt influenced (at least subliminally) by "Dear Prudence."

John also uses the same picking pattern during the verse, except in this case he holds down the D chord while descending the bassline from D to C and then chromatically down to Bb. **FIGURE 14** illustrates a similar pattern.

You'll find that once you have this pattern down cold, playing other pieces that use it becomes almost automatic—all you'll really need to do is learn the different chord shapes. A good way is to master the other great Lennon fingerpicking tunes. "Julia" uses pretty basic voicings, like those in **FIGURE 15**, but keep in mind that John uses a capo at the second fret. To play the chords to the verse to "Happiness is a Warm Gun" correctly, make sure you hold down the shapes and just change the top notes on the high E string, as in **FIGURE 16**. Refer to the tablature for the correct left-hand fingering.

No discussion on the acoustic guitar stylings of the Beatles would be complete without mentioning perhaps their greatest acoustic guitar performance: George Harrison's lilting "Here Comes the Sun." With the capo behind the 7th fret, George plays it with a pick using familiar open D, G and A7 chord shapes, like those depicted in **FIGURE 17**. At the end of each chorus, George plays a beautiful arpeggiated turnaround figure, not unlike **FIGURE 18,** using the E and B string notes as common tones above a moving line on the G string.

As the Beatles developed as a band, so did John, Paul and George develop as guitarists. Although they were by no means virtuosos (a fact that they freely acknowledged), they nonetheless crafted parts that were original, clever and integral to the song. Just think about it—one simply can't sing or play a Beatles tune without having to recreate a signature part note for note. It just wouldn't be the same song any other way! GWA

FIGURE 13

"Dropped-D" tuning (low to high: D A D G B E)

FIGURE 14

FIGURE 15

· With capo behind 2nd fret

* All pitches sound one whole step higher than written (Key of D). All tablature positions are relative to capo.

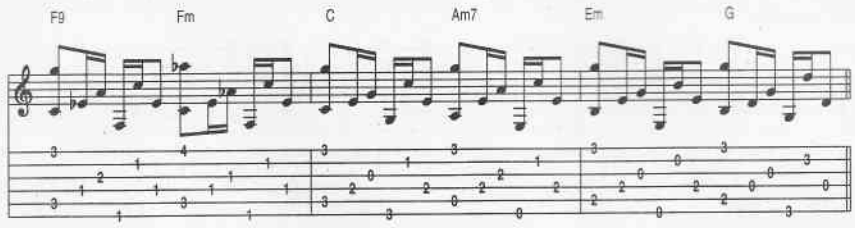


FIGURE 16

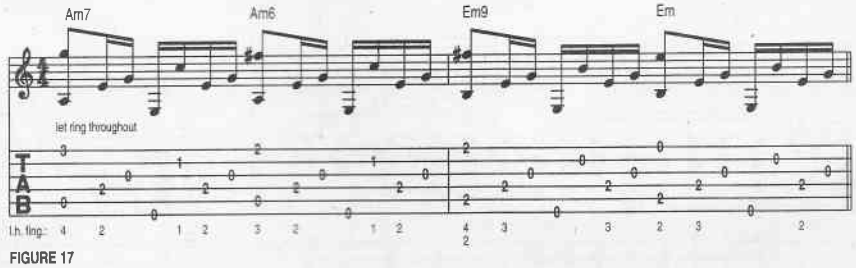


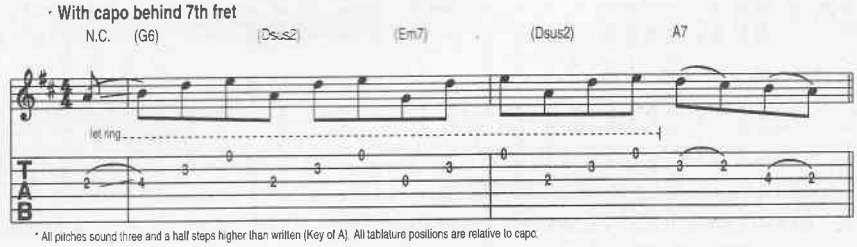
FIGURE 17

· With capo behind 7th fret

* All pitches sound three and a half steps higher than written (Key of A). All tablature positions are relative to capo.

FIGURE 18

· With capo behind 7th fret



* All pitches sound three and a half steps higher than written (Key of A). All tablature positions are relative to capo.

only wanna be with you

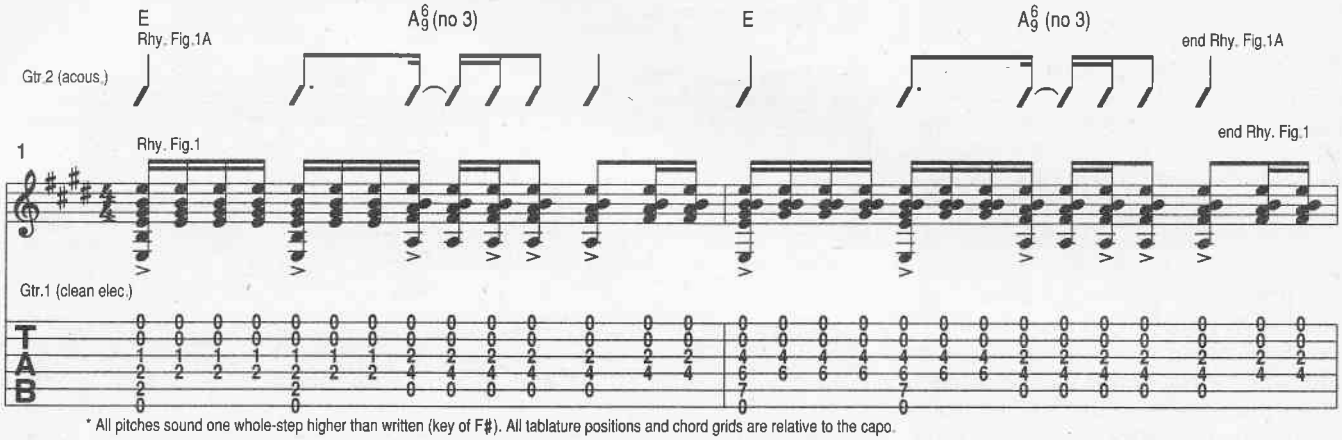
WORDS AND MUSIC BY DARIUS CARLOS RUCKER, EVERETT DEAN FELBER, MARK WILLIAM BRYAN AND JAMES GEORGE SONEFELD
TRANSCRIBED BY JEFF CATANIA

As heard on Hootie & The Blowfish's Atlantic recording **Cracked Rear View**

*** All gtrs. played w/capo behind 2nd fret**

A Intro

Moderate Rock ♩= 102



* All pitches sound one whole-step higher than written (key of F#). All tablature positions and chord grids are relative to the capo.

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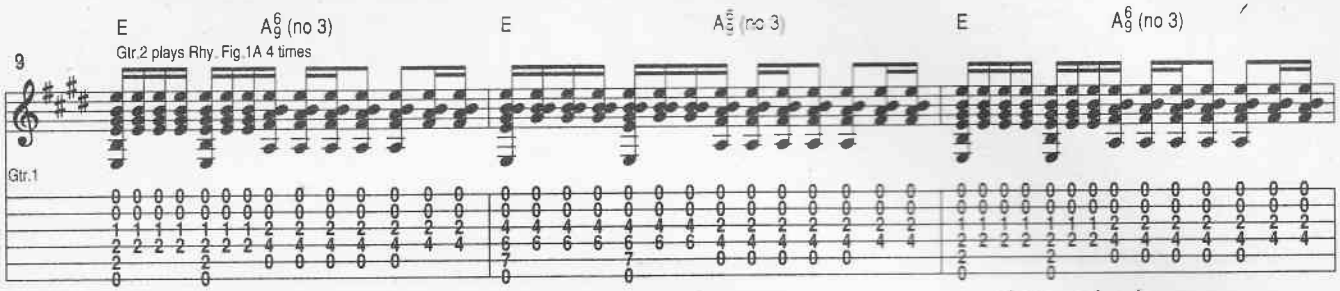
𝄋 B Verses

1. You and me we come from different worlds
2. You look at me You got nothing left to say
3. Put on a little Dylan Sittin' on a fence
4. Sometimes I wonder if we'll ever end

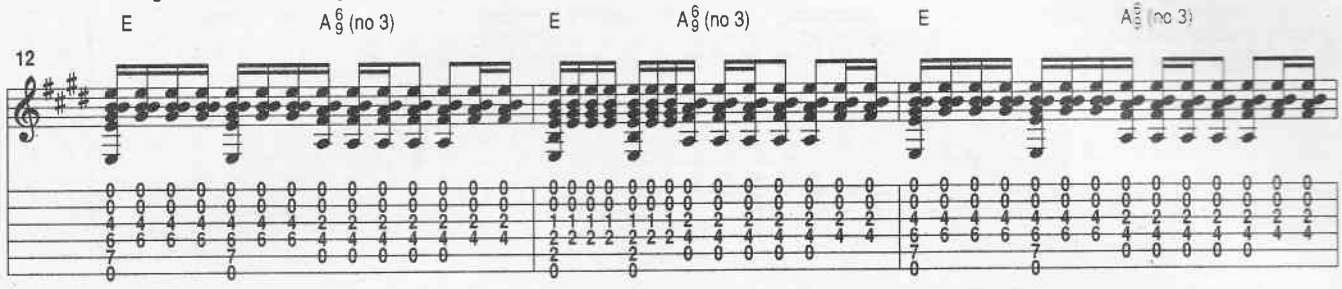
You like to laugh at me when I
I moan and pout at you un-
I say that line is great You
You get so mad at me when I



look at other girls
til I get my way
ask me what it meant by
go out with my friends

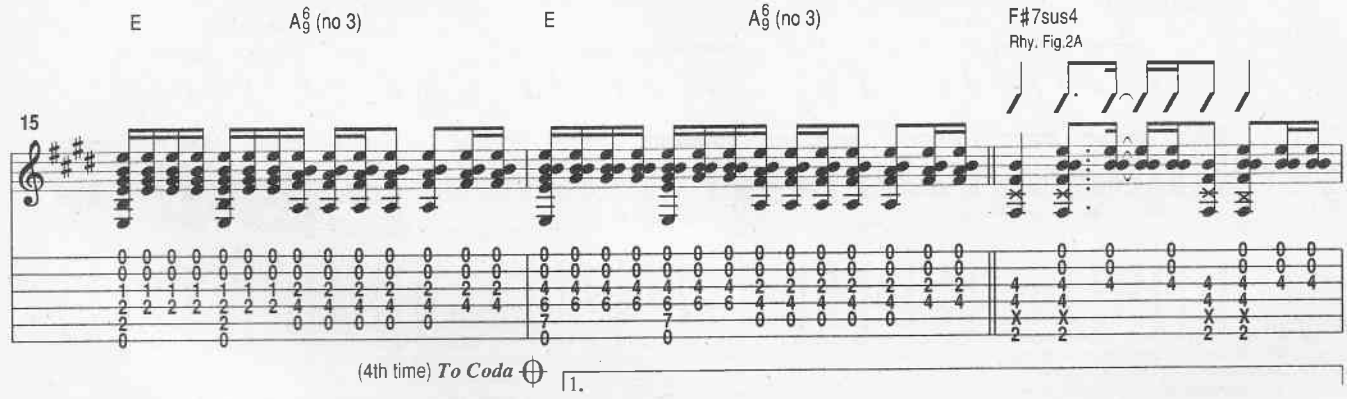
Sometimes you're crazy
I won't dance
"Said I shot a man named Gray
Sometimes you're crazy

and you wonder why
You won't sing
Took his wife to Italy
And you wonder why



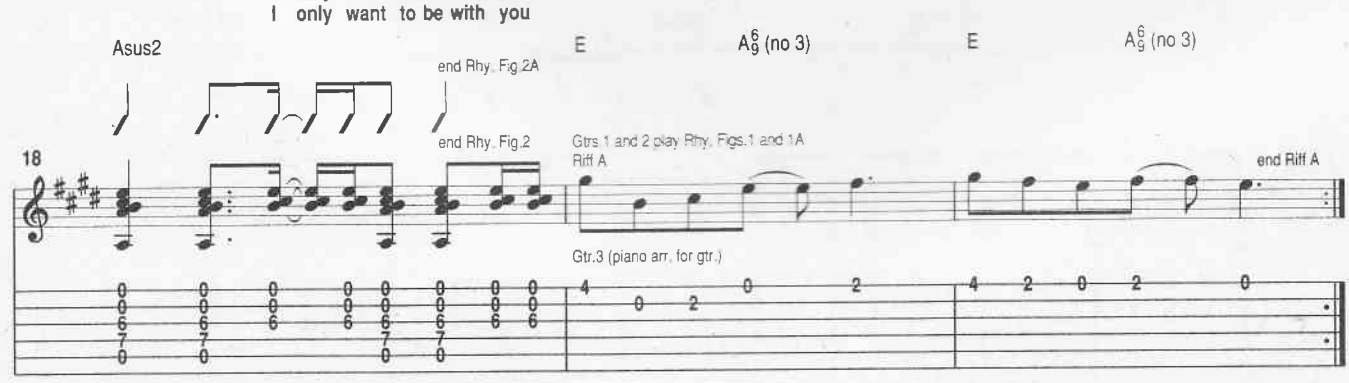
C Chorus

I'm such a baby 'cause the dolphins make me cry But there's nothin' I can do
I just want to love you but you want to wear my ring But there's nothin' I can do
She inherit a million bucks and when she died it came to me I can't help it if I'm lucky"
I'm such a baby Yeah the Dolphins make me cry But there's nothin' I can do



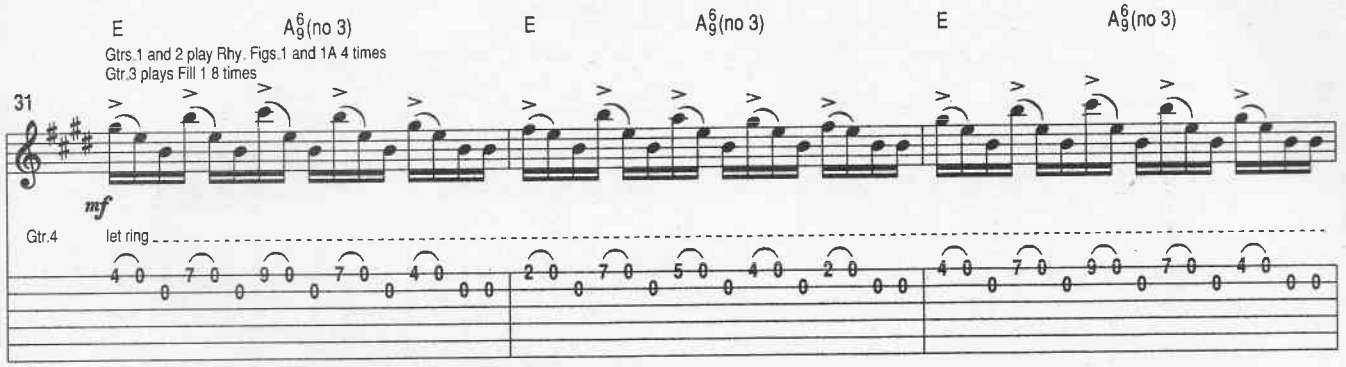
(4th time) *To Coda* 1.

I've been lookin' for a girl like you
I only want to be with you
I only want to be with you
I only want to be with you

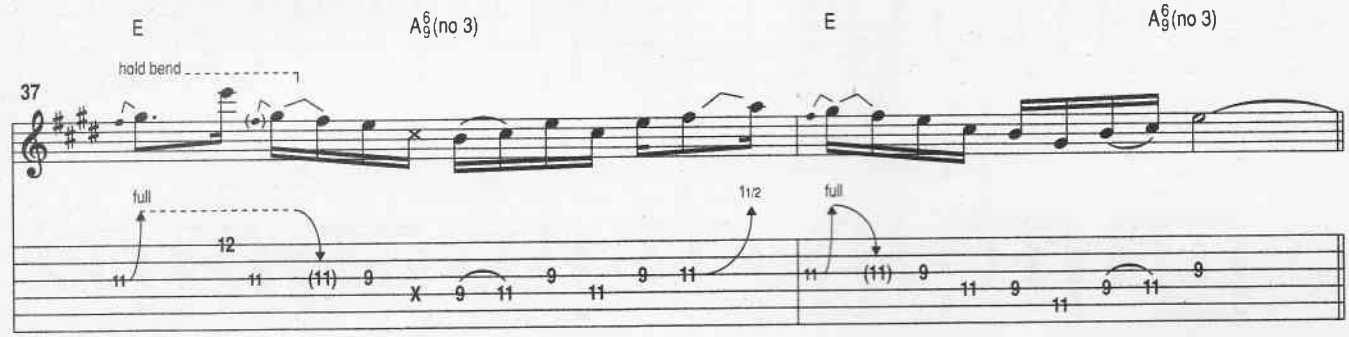


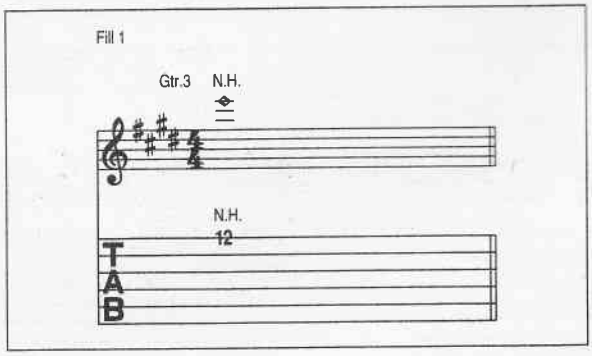
2.
You can call me your fool
I only want to be with you
E
A6/9 (no 3)
E
A6/9 (no 3)
Asus4
Rhy. Fig.3A
Bsus4
end Rhy. Fig.3A
Gtr.2 plays Fig.1A
Gtr.3 plays Riff A
Riff A1
21
end Riff A1
Gtr.4 (dirty elec.)
Rhy. Fig.3
end Rhy. Fig.3
Gtr.1
3.
E
A6/9 (no 3)
E
A6/9 (no 3)
E
A6/9 (no 3)
Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A
Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A
Gtrs.3 and 4 play Riffs A and A1
25
Ain't Bobby so cool
I only want to be with you
E
A6/9 (no 3)
Asus2
Bsus4
28

D Guitar Solo



Yeah I'm





E Chorus

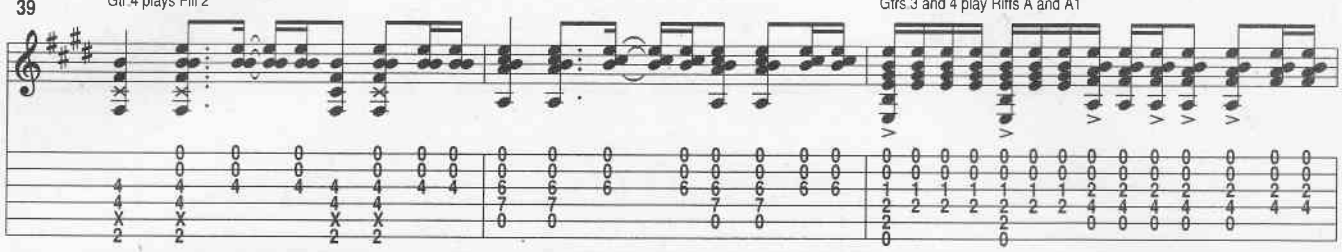
tangled up in blue I only want to be with you

F♯7sus4 Asus2 E A^6_9 (no 3)

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.2A
Gtr.4 plays Fill 2

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A
Gtrs.3 and 4 play Riffs A and A1

39



You can call me your fool Only want to be with you

E A^6_9 (no 3) Asus2 Bsus4

Gtr.2

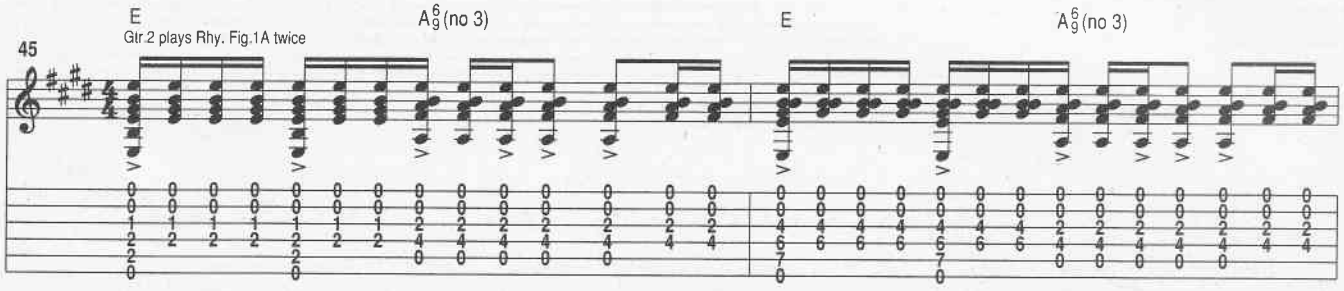
Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.3A

42

E A^6_9 (no 3) E A^6_9 (no 3)

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A twice

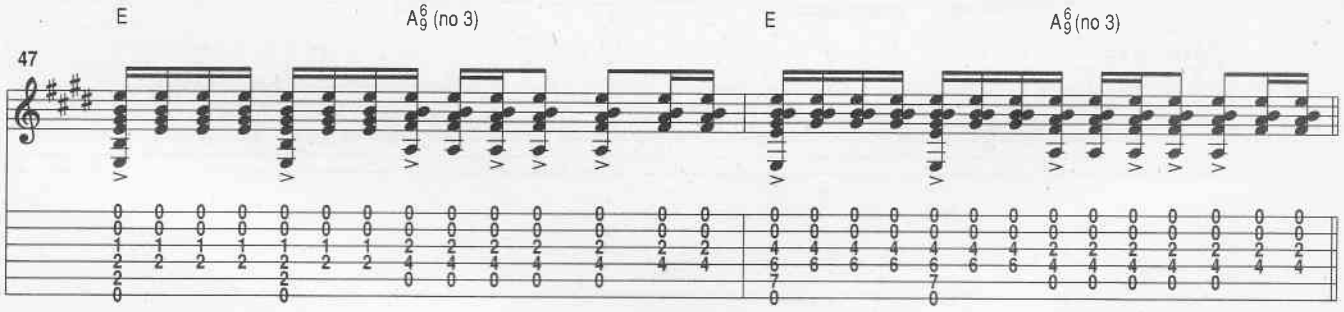
45



D.S. 𝄋 *al Coda* ⊕

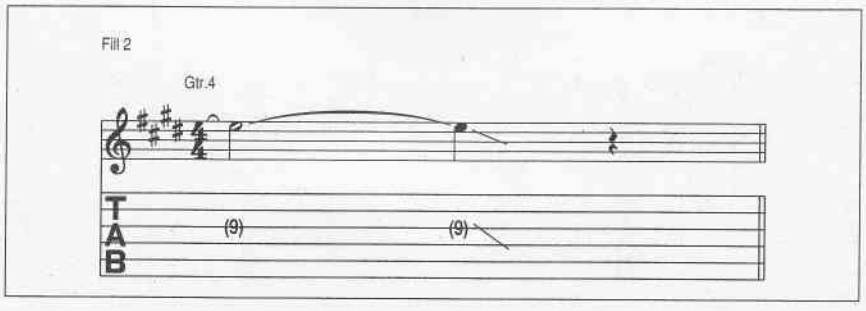
E A^6_9 (no 3) E A^6_9 (no 3)

47



Fill 2

Gtr.4



Coda

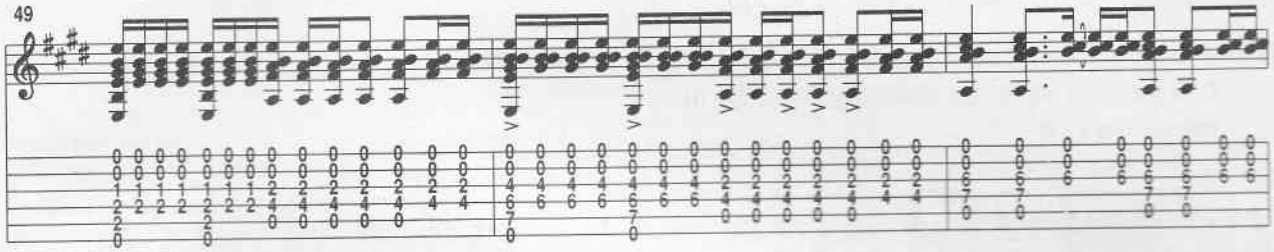
You can call me your fool

E A$^{6}_{9}$ (no 3) E A$^{6}_{9}$ (no 3) Asus2

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A
Gtrs.3 and 4 play Riffs A and A1

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.2A

49



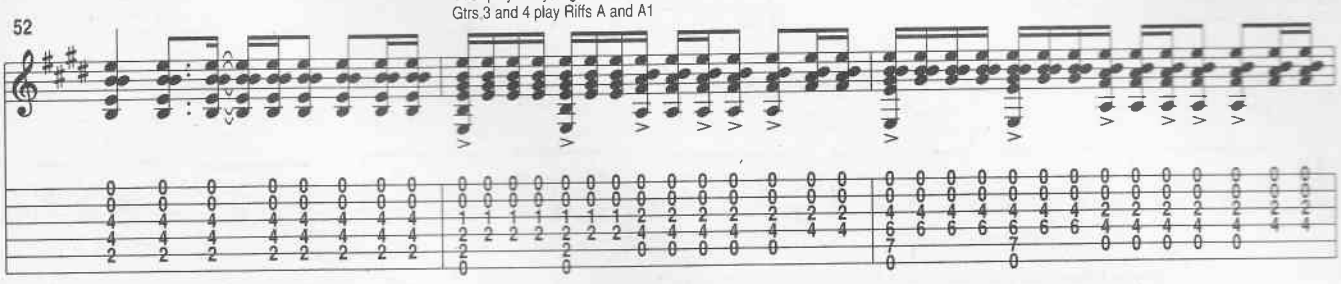
I only want to be with you

Yeah I'm

Bsus4 E A$^{6}_{9}$ (no 3) E A$^{6}_{9}$ (no 3)

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.1A
Gtrs.3 and 4 play Riffs A and A1

52



tangled up in blue I only want to be with

Asus2 Bsus4

Gtr.2 plays Rhy. Fig.3A

55

1., 2., 3. 4.

you I only want to be with you

E A$^{6}_{9}$(no 3) E A$^{6}_{9}$ (no 3) E

Gtrs.1 and 2 play Rhy. Figs.1 and 1A 1st meas. only

57 Gtr.3 Gtr.4

yesterday

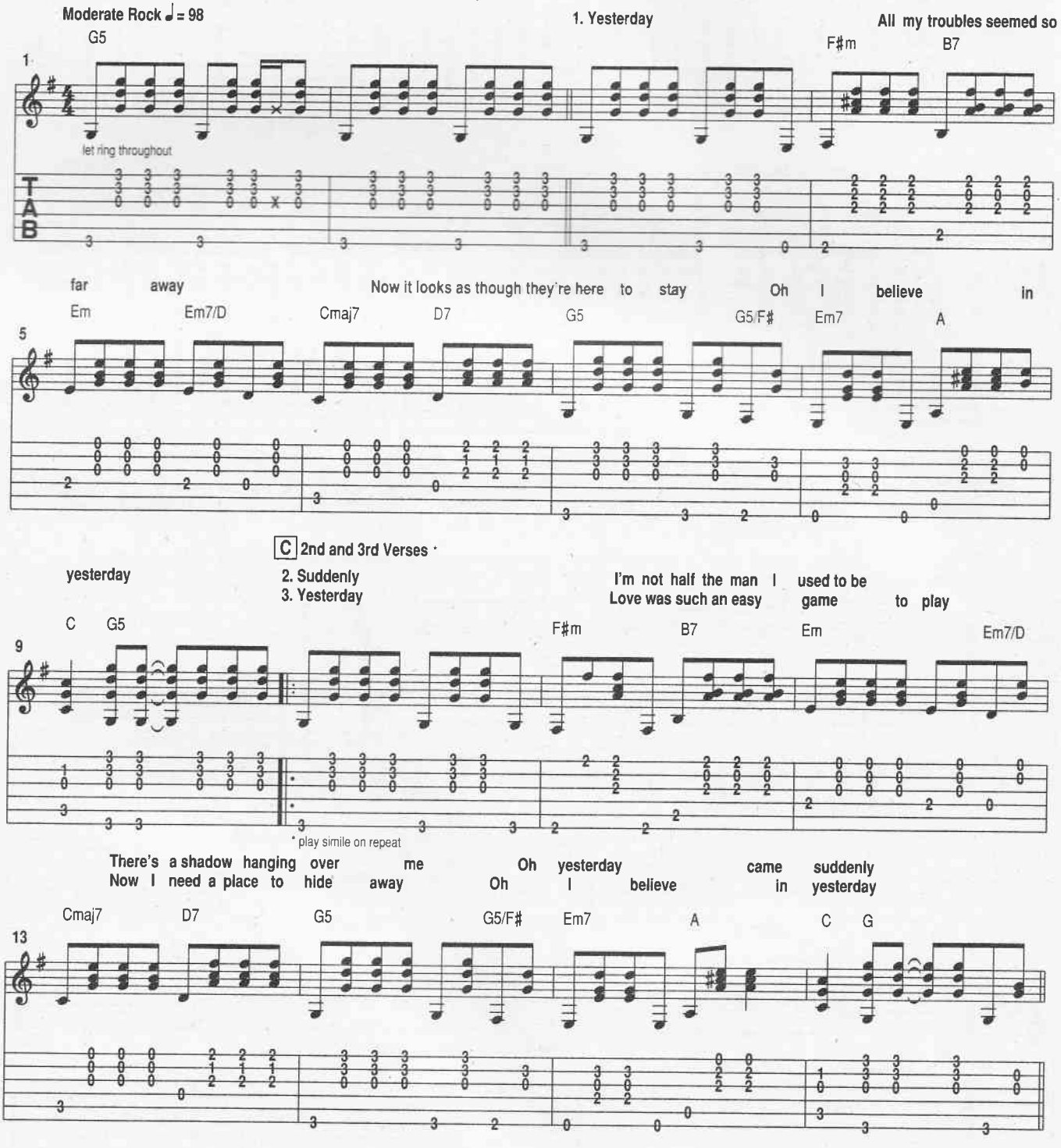
WORDS AND MUSIC BY JOHN LENNON AND PAUL McCARTNEY
TRANSCRIBED BY ASKOLD BUK
As heard on the Beatles' Parlophone recording **HELP!**

A Intro

B 1st Verse

Tune down one whole step (low to high: D G C F A D)

Moderate Rock ♩ = 98



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D 1st and 2nd Bridges

Why she had to go I don't know she wouldn't say

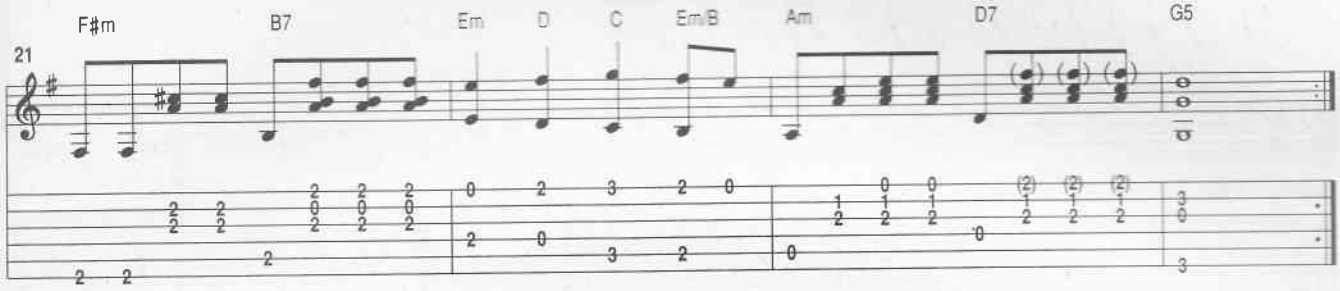
F♯m B7 Em D C Em/B Am6 D7 G5

17

I said something wrong now I long for yesterday

F♯m B7 Em D C Em/B Am D7 G5

21



E 4th Verse

4. Yesterday love was such an easy game to play

F♯m B7 Em Em7/D

25

Now I need a place to hide away Oh I believe in

Cmaj7 D7 G5 G/F♯ Em7 A

28

yesterday Mm

C G5 A7 C G5

31

let ring

tangerine

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JIMMY PAGE
TRANSCRIBED BY DAVE WHITEHILL
As heard on the Atlantic recording **Led Zeppelin III**

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* Whole-step bends may be substituted for slurs.

I was her love
She was my queen
And now a thousand years
between
G
D
C
D
G
D
Dsus2 D
Dsus2
end Rhy. Fig.1
24
let ring
D 2nd Verse
2. Thinking how it used to be
Does she still remember
times like
D
Am Asus4 Am
G
D
Am Asus4 Am Asus2 G
D
C
28
Gtr. 2
let ring
let ring
Mandolin
these
To think of us again
And I do
G/B
Am
G
D
Dsus4 D
Dsus2 D
32

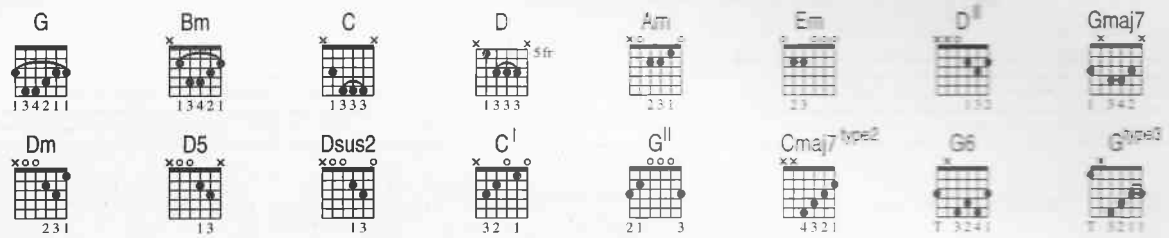
E Interlude

F 2nd Chorus

between
G
Dsus2 D
Dsus2 D
Rhy. Fig.2
Gtr. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 1
52
8va
D
Dsus4 D
Dsus2
Gtr.2
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig.2 (first 3 bars)
57
8va
Pedal Steel
arr. for gtr.
full
Dsus4 D
Dsus2
D
Dsus4 D
Dsus2
D
Dsus4 D
61
G Outro
Am7
Am
G
Gsus4 G
Fadd9
Fadd9
Gsus4 G
64
Gtr. 2
let ring
rit.
Pedal Steel
rit.
Gtr. 1
N.H.

uncle john's band

MUSIC JERRY GARCIA
WORDS BY ROBERT HUNTER
TRANSCRIBED BY ANDY ALEDORT
As heard on the Grateful Dead's Warner Bros. recording **Working Man's Dead**



A Intro
Moderate Country Rock ♩ = 132

* Beginning at bar 3, Gtr.1 is doubled simile by another acoustic gtr.

B 1st Verse

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when life looks like easy street there is danger at your door
G
C
G
13
Think this through with me
Let me know your mind
Am
Em
C
D
17
Whoa oh what I want to know is are you kind
C
D
G
D
C
G
D
G
21
C 2nd Verse
It's a buck dancer's choice my friends better
Gtr.1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile
G
end Rhy. Fig. 1
25

take my advice
You know all the rules by now and the fire from the ice
29
C
G
C
G
(8)

Will you come with me
Won't you come with me
Whoa oh what I want to know
35
Am
Em
C
D
C D
G D C G

D 3rd Verse
Will you come with me
God damn well I
G D G
G
Gtr.1
41

declare
Have you seen the like
Their walls are built of can-
C
Am
G
D
C
46
(4)

E 1st Chorus
non balls Their motto is don't tread on me
C G D C D
Come hear Un-
G
Rhy. Fig. 2
50
cle Johns' band playing to the tide
C Am Em D
Come with me or go
C
54
F Guitar Solo
alone He's come to take his children home
G D C D G Gmaj7 C
end Rhy. Fig. 2
58
D G Bm C D G Bm C
62

G 4th Verse
It's the same story the
Gtr.1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile
(omit last bar)
C D G Bm C D G
66
crow told me It's the only one he know
Like the morning sun you come and
70 G C G
like the wind you go
Ain't no time to hate
Barely time to wait
75 C G Am Em C D
Whoa oh what I want to know
Where does the
80 D C D G D C G D
full
time go
H 5th Verse
I live in a silver mine and I
84 G
Gtr.1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1
G
P.M.

call it Beggar's Tomb I got me a violin and I
C G
88
1/2
beg you call the tune Anybody's choice
C G Am Em
92
full full
I can hear your voice Whoa oh what I want to know
96 C D C D G D C G
How does the song go
100 D G
2nd Chorus
Come hear Uncle John's Band by the riverside Got some things to talk about
Gtr.1 plays Rhy. Fig.2
104 G C Am G D C
here beside the rising tide Come hear Uncle John's Band playing to the tide
Gtr.1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (1st 7 bars only)
110 G D C D G C Am G D

J Interlude

Come on along or go alone He's come to take his children home

C G D C D Dm

Whoa oh what I

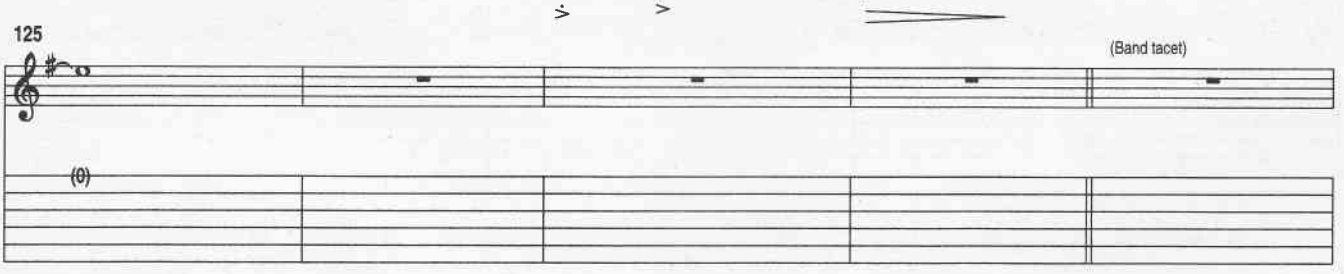
G C D5 Dsus2

(play 7 times)

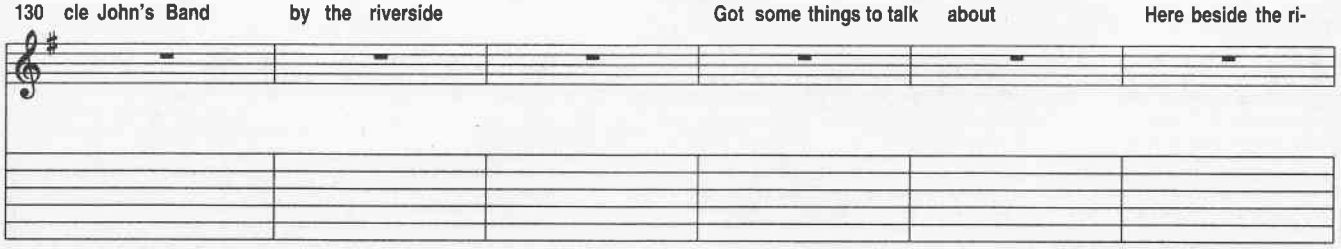
K Breakdown Chorus

want to know How does the song go Come hear Un-

C[I] G[II] N.C.



130 cle John's Band by the riverside Got some things to talk about Here beside the ri-



L Out-chorus (Band in)

sing tide Come hear Uncle John's Band playing to the tide

G Gmaj7 G6 G^type3 C Am G D

136

Come on along or go alone He's come to take his children home

C G ④ open D D C D^II

141

M Outro

Dm ④ open D Da da da da da Da

G C Dm

145

Da da da da da Da Da da da da da da

G C Dm G C Dsus2

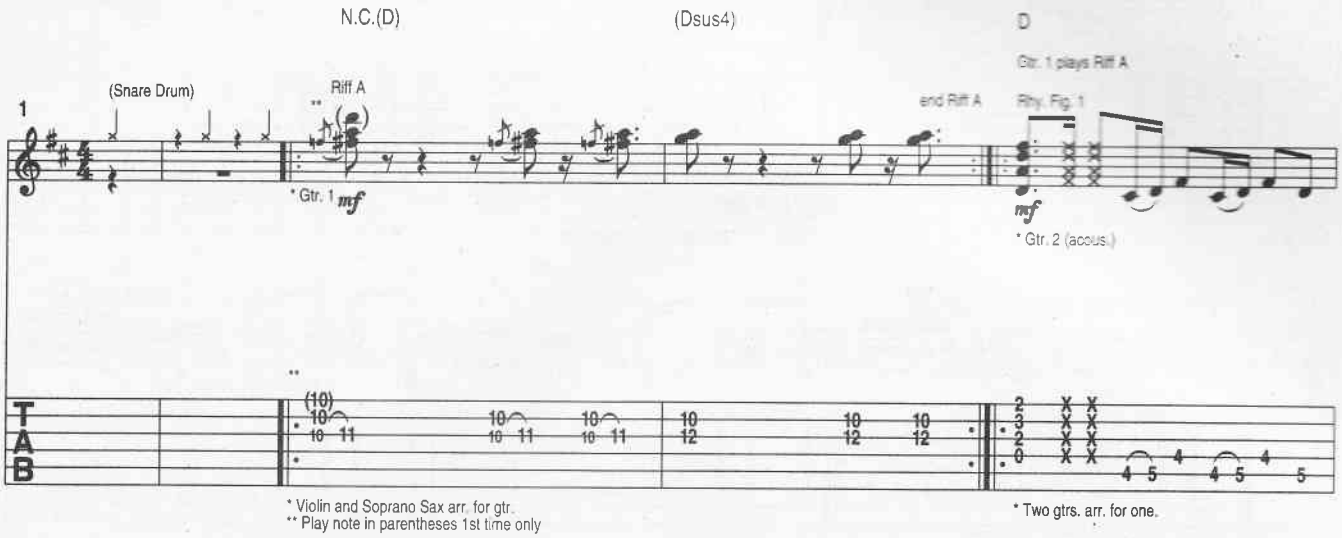
148

ants marching

WORDS AND MUSIC BY DAVID MATTHEWS
TRANSCRIBED BY DALE TURNER
As heard on the Dave Matthews Band's RCA recording **Under the Table and Dreaming**

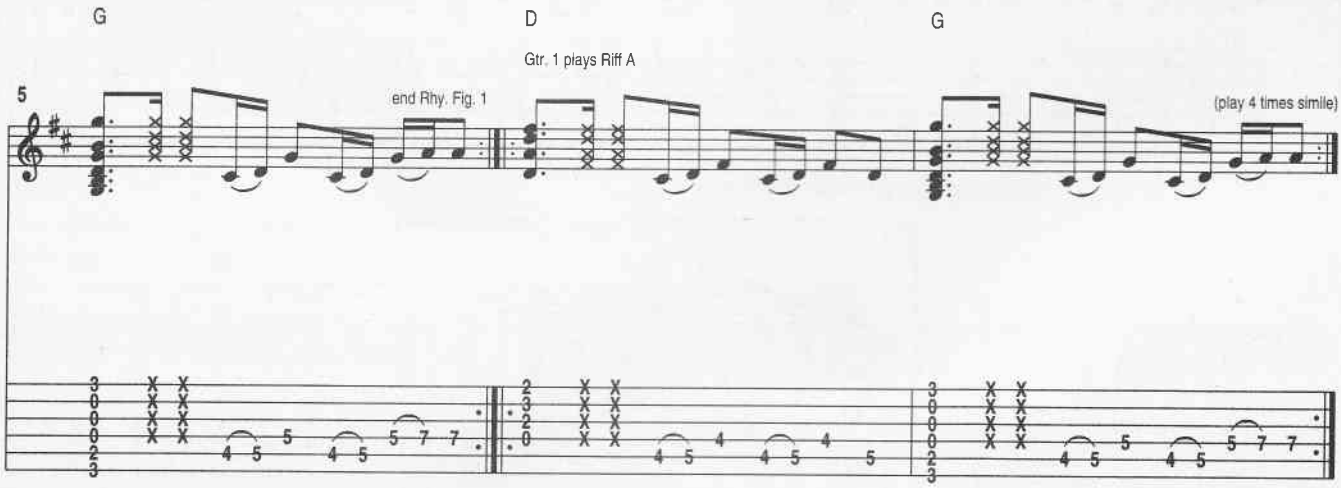
A **Intro**

Moderate Rock ♩ = 114



B **1st Verse**

1. He wakes up in the morning
Does his teeth bite to eat and he's rolling
Never changes a thing
The week ends the week begins
2. She thinks



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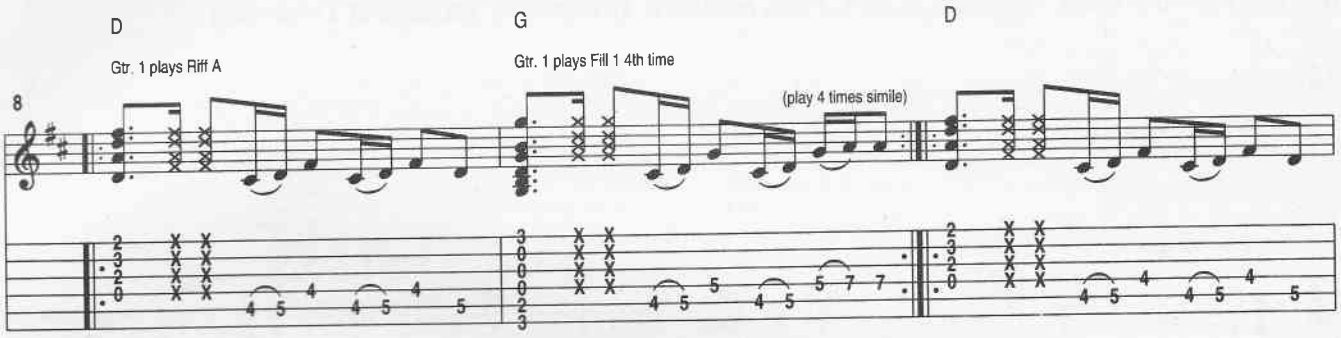
C 2nd Verse

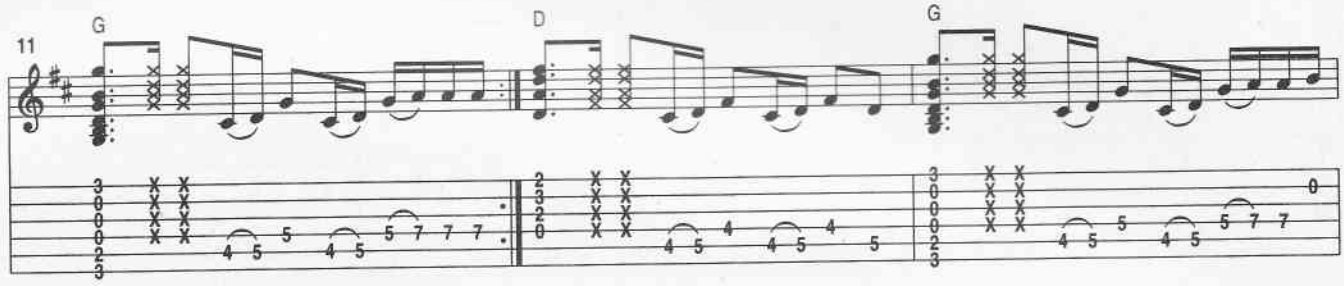
we look at each other
Wondering what the other is thinking
But we never say a thing
And these crimes between us grow deeper

D Sax and Violin Break

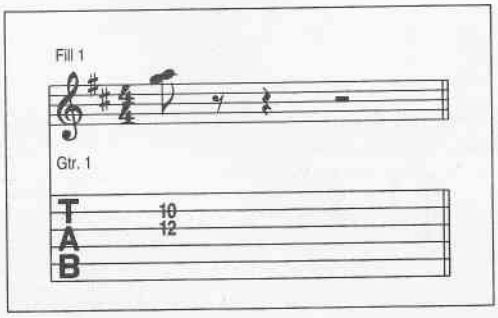


E 1st Bridge

Take these chances



place them in a box until a quieter time Lights



down you up and die

F 3rd Verse

3. Goes to visit his mommy she
feeds him well His concerns he forgets them
And remembers being small
Playing under the table and dreaming

D

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A

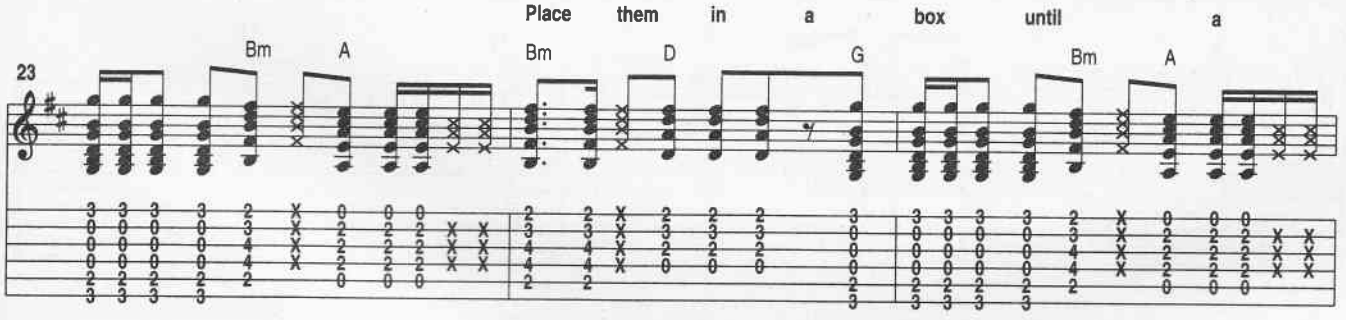
Gtr. 1 plays Fill 1 4th time

(play 4 times simile)

𝄋 G 2nd Bridge

Take these chances

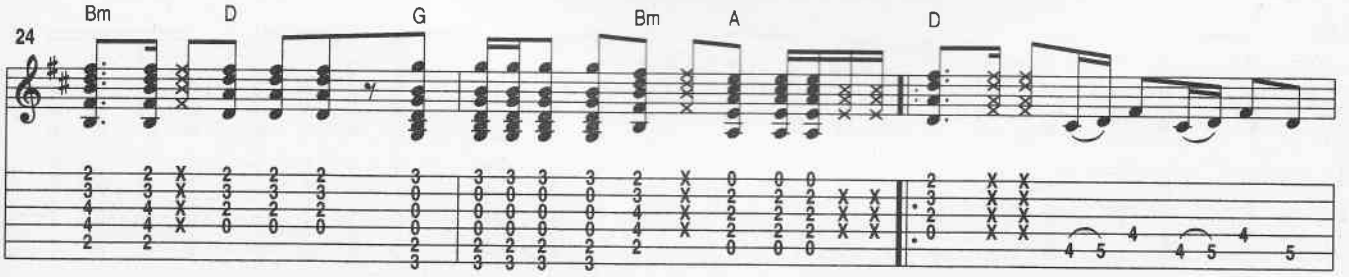
Bm D G



Place them in a box until a

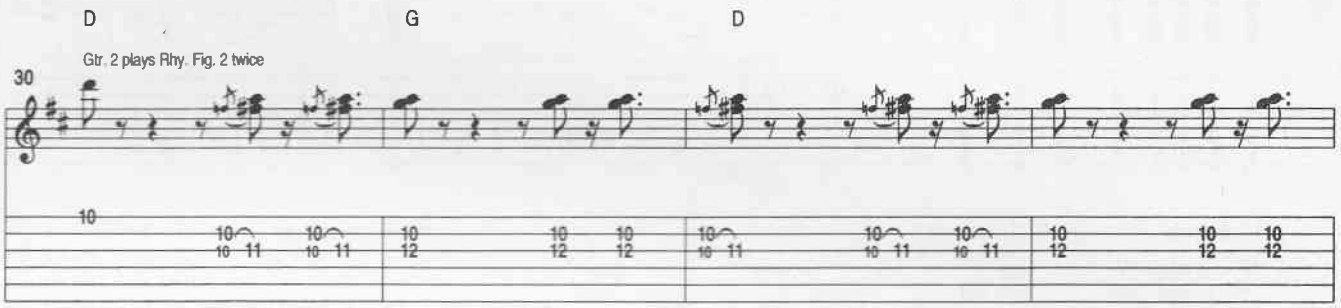
(2nd time) *To Coda* ⊕ H 1st Interlude

quieter time Lights down you up and die



I 4th Verse

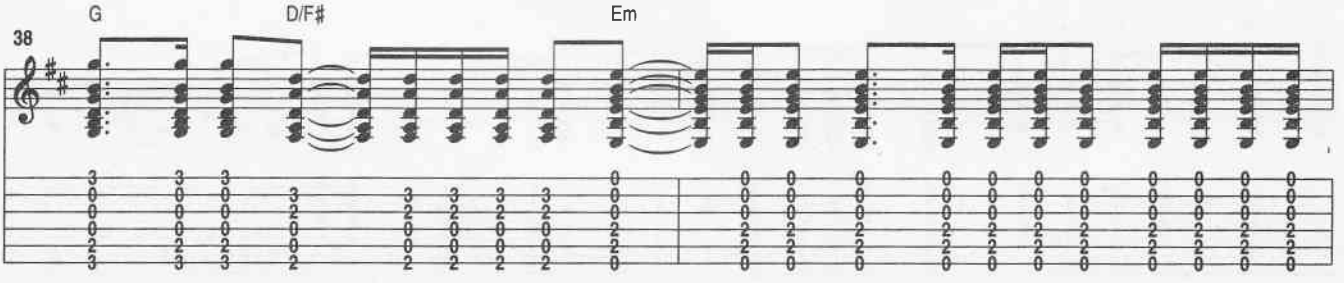
4. Driving along this highway All these cars and upon the sidewalk

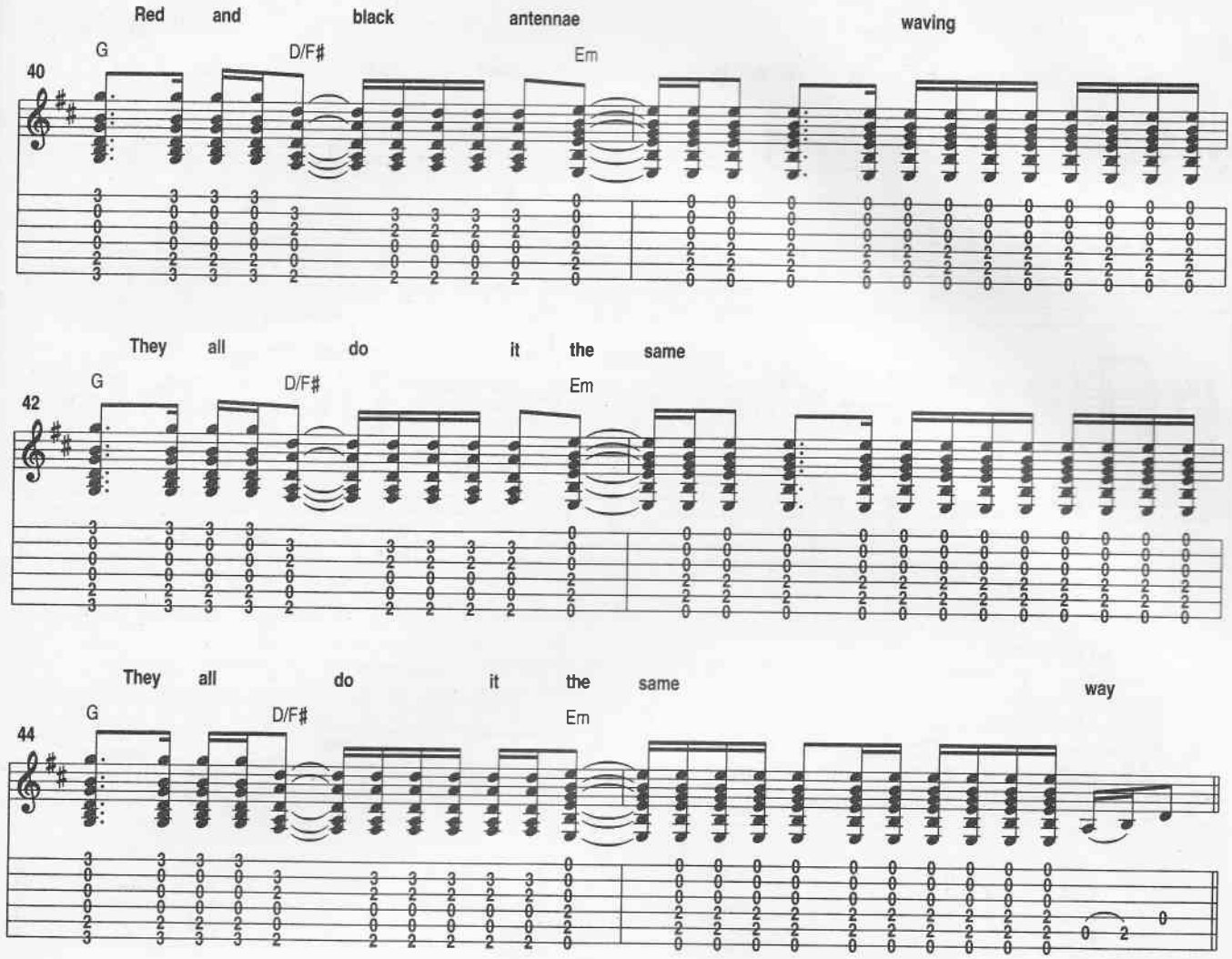


People in every direction No words exchanged No time to exchange uh When all

J Chorus

the little ants are marching





K 5th Verse

5. Yeah

D.S. 𝄋 al Coda
loose end loose end cut cut On the fence good not to offend cut cut cut cut
51
G
D
G
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
Coda
L 2nd Interlude
D
G
Gtr. 1 plays Fill 2 3rd time
54
(play 3 times simile)
M Fiddle Solo
D
G
D
G
56
(play 3 times)
Fill 2
Gtr. 1
T
A
B

N * Outro
G
D/F#
Em
60
(play 4 times simile)
* Sax and violin ad lib until end.
Am
G
D/F#
62
Bm
D
G
Bm
A
64
D
Gtr. 1 plays Riff A
G
66
(play 3 times simile)
Lights
down
you
up
and
die
D
G
D
68
Gtr. 1
rit.
Gtr. 2
rit.

altered states

GUITAR WORLD ACOUSTIC'S GUIDE TO ALTERNATE TUNINGS

— BY *Dave Whitehill* —

Guitarists known for their use of alternate tunings (clockwise, from top right): Keith Richards; Crosby, Stills & Nash; John Renbourn; Michael Hedges; Joni Mitchell

THE PRIMARY ALLURE OF ALTERNATE tunings is their intoxicatingly liberating power—to paraphrase Captain James T. Kirk, they let you boldly go where no guitarist has gone before. Every one of them (and there are many) is like a miniature Starship Enterprise, a trusty vehicle for exploring uncharted musical territories. One tuning may expand the instrument's pitch range substantially, while another may facilitate the fingering of unusual chord voicings that would otherwise be very difficult, if not impossible, to play in standard tuning; still another allows you to "transform" your guitar into a mandolin, dulcimer, or 12-string.

We begin this lesson by exploring the alternate tunings most widely used by well-known contemporary acoustic guitarists, and by illustrating their merits via some appropriate musical examples; later, we'll venture into some less common alternate tunings. All tunings will be spelled from the lowest string to the highest. Although they are intended for six-string guitar, they may be adapted to 12-string.

TRANSPOSED TUNINGS

The term "transposed tunings" refers to a category of tunings where all six strings are retuned proportionally, their intervallic relationships remaining as they were in standard tuning (E A D G B E). This is comparable to using a capo, though the strings are almost always tuned lower instead of higher. The two most common transposed tunings are "down-a-half-step" (Eb Ab Db Gb Bb Eb) and "down-a-whole-step" (D G C F A D), though guitarists have been known to detune all six strings by a minor third (C# F# B E G# C#) or lower.

Here are a few reasons why guitarists use transposed tunings:

• To play stock "open chord" voicings (or anything that uses open strings) in a lower key, to accommodate a vocalist's preference.

• To make the guitar sound deeper and more resonant (as compared to using a capo for a brighter, "lighter" sound).

• To lower the tension of the strings, making them feel "slinkier"— easier to fret, pick and bend.

• To alleviate tension on the guitar's neck—a preventive measure often taken by conscientious 12-string owners to help prevent their guitar's neck from bowing. They usually use a capo to compensate for the drop in pitch.

A well-known example of a song played on an acoustic guitar tuned down a half-step is Nirvana's "About a Girl," from its *Unplugged in New York* album (guitarist Kurt Cobain used this tuning for just about every song he recorded). Notable acoustic examples of down-a-whole-step tuning are Neil Young's "Sugar Mountain" (*Harvest*) and "Hey, Hey, My My" (*Rust Never Sleeps*), and "Yesterday" by the Beatles (*HELP!*). [*A complete transcription begins on page 60.*] Transposed tunings are often combined with other tunings, as you'll soon see.

DROPPED TUNINGS

"Dropped tunings" are tunings in which the pitch of only one string (on occasion,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: LISCIANO VITI / RETNA LTD.; SHERRY RAYN BARNETT / MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES; DENISE

two strings) is lowered, or "dropped," below standard tuning. The most popular of these is "dropped-D" tuning, which is arrived at by detuning the 6th string one whole-step (the equivalent of two frets) from E to D. The easiest way to do this is to use the open 4th string as a reference tone and lower the pitch of the 6th string until the two strings sound a perfect octave apart.

Naturally, this tuning is well-suited for playing in the key of D (major or minor), as you can see by fingering the familiar open D chord and strumming all six strings (see **FIGURE 1**). One minor drawback to this tuning is that it makes it necessary to refinger other chords with roots on the 6th string, such as E minor and G major (see **FIGURE 2**). (For the Em chord, the thumb may be used to fret the 6th string. The G major chord requires a partial pinkie or ring-finger barre across the bottom three strings.) This is a small price to pay, though, when one considers the advantages this tuning offers: extended low-range for playing runs in the key of D, like the one depicted in **FIGURE 3**; and an easier way to play authentic piano-style bass-chord patterns, such as those illustrated in **FIGURES 4** and **5**.

Dropped-D tuning is used in almost every genre of guitar music, including country blues, classical, country, acoustic rock, ragtime, folk, heavy metal and alternative. I first discovered dropped-D tuning while trying to figure out Pete Townshend's acoustic guitar solo at the close of the Who's "Overture," from the rock opera *Tommy*. Other well-known songs that use this tuning on an acoustic guitar are "Country Road" by James Taylor (*Sweet Baby James*), "Dear Prudence" by the Beatles (*The Beatles [White Album]*) and "Harvest Moon" by Neil Young (*Harvest Moon*).

For "All Apologies" (*Nirvana: Unplugged in New York*), Kurt Cobain combined dropped-D tuning with down-a-half-step tuning to produce a deep, resonant sound. The resultant tuning is Db Ab Db Gb Bb Eb. **FIGURE 6** uses this same tuning and is not unlike the intro to the above-mentioned song.

The 6th string can be "dropped" to other pitches as well—I've heard it detuned as low as A! If you do develop a penchant for tones that deep, take a tip from Michael Hedges and replace your guitar's 6th string with a bass string, since the wobbly intonation and rubber-band action that result from detuning a normal guitar string beyond a whole-step can pose a problem.

"Drop tuning" the treble strings is a different story. This practice is usually employed as a means of achieving close, unguitaristic chord voicings. For example, listen to what happens to some lowly E-type barre chords after the 1st string is dropped to D (see **FIGURE 7**). Presto, they've become dominant seventh chords!

Detuning both high and low E strings a whole-step puts your guitar into what is commonly called "double dropped-D," or "English D," tuning (D A D G B D). I learned this tuning while figuring out Buffalo Springfield's "Bluebird" (*Buffalo Springfield*). I came to the conclusion that it was the only means available for playing the heavenly C major ninth chord leading into the last verse. **FIGURE 8** illustrates

that chord, which is fingered just like an open C major seventh chord in standard tuning, preceeded by a phrase based on some lines from the song's solo. Other well-known examples of songs that use this tuning are "Black Water" by the Doobie Brothers (*What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits*), "The End" by the Doors, from *The Doors* (performed by Robbie Krieger on a clean electric, but worth mentioning here because it's played in an "acoustic" style), and Eric Johnson's "Song for George," from *Ah Via Musicom*. [*A complete transcription of "Song for George" appeared in the March 1991 issue of* Guitar School.]

The alternate-tuning trend kicked into high gear when Buffalo Springfield broke up and guitarist Stephen Stills teamed up with fellow pickers Graham Nash and Byrds alumnus David Crosby to form Crosby, Stills & Nash. Crosby, who turned Joni Mitchell on to alternate tunings, had a distinctly impressionistic take on retuning his guitar for many of his compositions. The haunting "Guinnevere," from *Crosby, Stills & Nash*, is a prime example of his unique style. The tuning he used for this song was the rather unusual E A D G A D. Dropping both the 1st and 2nd strings down a whole-step enabled him to play figures similar to those illustrated in **FIGURE 9**.

Another fairly common double-dropped tuning involves detuning both the 6th and 5th strings a whole-step (D G D G B E). Chet Atkins, who refers to this as "altered G" tuning, used it on his version of Don McLean's "Vincent" (*The RCA Years*).

To perform Fleetwod Mac's "Never Going Back Again" (*Rumours*), guitarist Lindsey Buckingham dropped the 5th string down a whole-step to G and the 6th string down two whole-steps to C, enabling him to easily incorporate alternating root/fifth basslines into this bouncy fingerpicked, ragtime-style piece. He then used a capo at the 6th fret to transpose the entire song from the key of C up to the key of Gb. **FIGURE 10** is similar to the song's main verse part. [*A complete transcription of "Never Going Back Again" can be found in the May 1992 issue of* Guitar School.]

FIGURE 11

Tuning: D A D G A D

FIGURE 12

Tuning: D A D G A D

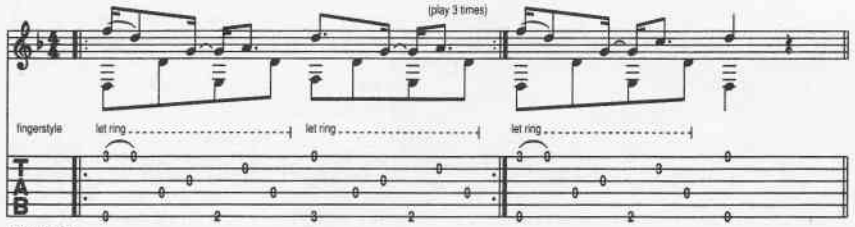


FIGURE 13

Tuning: D A D G A D

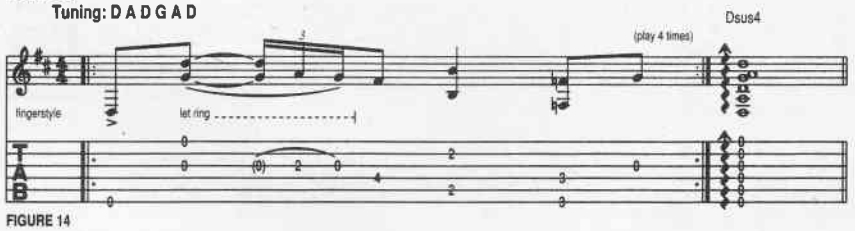


FIGURE 14

Tuning: D A D G A D

MODAL TUNINGS

Combining David Crosby's "Guinnevere" tuning (E A D G A D) with dropped D produces the alternate tuning known as D A D G A D (usually pronounced "dadgad," as if it were a word). This is one of the most popular of what are known as "modal tunings." Modal, as used here, stretches the definition of the word a bit, and is really just a way of saying that the tuning isn't major or minor, unlike the "open tunings" we'll cover shortly. In actual usage, it makes more sense to say that modal tunings are those which work well with a variety of modes. To demonstrate, here's a fingerstyle pattern in D major performed in D A D G A D tuning (see **FIGURE 11**) that can be easily transposed to D minor (see **FIGURE 12**).

Over the years, D A D G A D has become popular among fingerstylists specializing in traditional English and Irish fingerstyle music—Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Davey Graham, Richard Thompson, Martin Carthy and the French guitarist Pierre Bensusan, to name a few. Even the hard-rockin' Jimmy Page has explored D A D G A D, as evidenced by "White Summer,"from the Yardbirds' *Little Games* album, and "Black Mountain Side" (similar to **FIGURE 13**), from *Led Zeppelin*. He later used this same tuning with an electric guitar on "Kashmir" (*Physical Graffiti*) [*see related story, p. 30*]. On this side of the ocean, guitarists using D A D G A D include Stephen Stills ("4X20," from *Déjà Vu*), and Michael Hedges ("Peg Leg Speed King,"

from *Breakfast in the Field*, and "Ragamuffin," from *Aerial Boundaries*). [*A complete transcription of the latter appeared in the May 1988 issue of* Guitar World.]

Now try your own hand at D A D G A D with this fingerstyle selection (see **FIGURE 14**), and see if it doesn't conjure up visions of the Emerald Isle. Two other musical devices that help give this figure its "green sound" are the 12/8 time signature, which gives it a triplet feel, common to Irish jigs, and the modality of D Dorian (D E F G A B C) throughout, except for the last measure. One of the coolest features of D A D G A D tuning is the fact that the 3rd and 2nd strings are tuned a major second apart (A-B). This lends a harp-like quality to melodies played in this tuning.

Another mode that works well in D A D G A D tuning is D Mixolydian (D E F# G A B C), as illustrated in **FIGURE 15**. One advantage to using such repetitive alternating open-string bass patterns is that they afford your left hand more mobility to improvise melodies. Once you learn this phrase, try devising your own variations on these notes and then work up the neck into other positions as well.

Another beautiful modal tuning is D G C G C D, which is what Jimmy Page used for the studio version of "The Rain Song," from Led Zeppelin's *Houses of the Holy*. (The live version, from *The Song Remains the Same*, is tuned a whole-step higher—E A D A D E—and is performed on electric guitar.) **FIGURE 16** illustrates a movable chord shape employed by Page throughout the song. This figure demonstrates how this particular tuning facilitates playing melodies in octaves.

One thing these modal tunings have in common is that both spell suspended fourth chords, Dsus4 (D G A) and Gsus4 (G C D), respectively. Other related tunings based on sus4 or sus2 harmonies are:

- E B E A B E (D A D G A D raised a whole-step)
- E B E F# B E
- E A D E A D
- D G D G C D
- D A D E A D
- D G D G A D.

OPEN TUNINGS

Another broad category of altered tunings are open tunings. Open tunings are those where the open strings are tuned to a consonant chord of some sort, typically major or minor. If you take the now familiar D A D G A D tuning and drop the 3rd string down a half step to F#, your guitar would then end up being tuned D A D F# A D. This tuning is called "open D" (also known as "Vastapol" or "Vestapol"), as the open strings are tuned to the notes of a D major chord (D F# A). Richie Havens has pretty much made a career out of this tuning, except for those rare times when he alters it slightly to "open D7" (D A D F# A C) or "D minor" (D A D F A D), as in "Motherless Child," from *Woodstock*. Open tunings are great for just about any style of chord melody playing since they free the fretting hand from having to finger a chord while playing a melody. This fact made open tunings popular with such solo acoustic blues guitarists as Bukka White, Bo Carter and Robert Johnson [*see the July 1990 issue of* Guitar School *for a transcription of Johnson's "Crossroad Blues"*].

Other tunings often used in the blues idiom are "open E" (E B E G# B E, tuned just like an open E chord in standard tuning), "open G" (D G D G B D) and "open A" (E A E A C# E, like an open A chord in standard tuning). **FIGURES 17-19** illustrate how the aforementioned and other bluesmen use these open tunings, with and without a slide or bottleneck. Changing to other major chords is a simple affair since open tunings exist in a universe of one-digit barre chords. Naturally, this is very convenient for slide players, because there is less chance of accidentally hitting "sour" notes. Realize, however, that even if you play very cleanly and precisely, plucking only the "right" strings, the idle strings still vibrate sympathetically and generate audible overtones, unless they're completely muted by one or both hands. This explains why open tunings sound so harmonically "pure" or "correct."

Although open tunings provide you with a simple and convenient way to finger barre chords, you'll probably soon become bored with all this parallel motion and may desire to know some different voicings. For a cool I-IV move, try this signature Keith

FIGURE 15
Tuning: D A D G A D

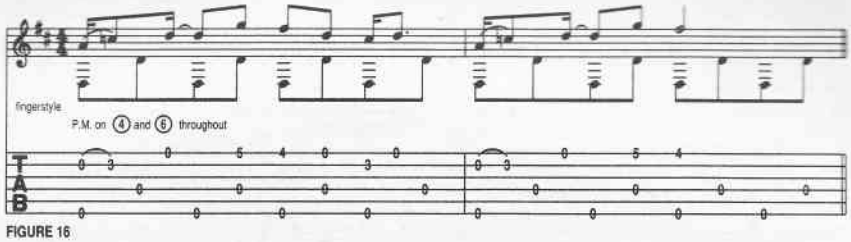


FIGURE 16
Tuning: D G C G C D

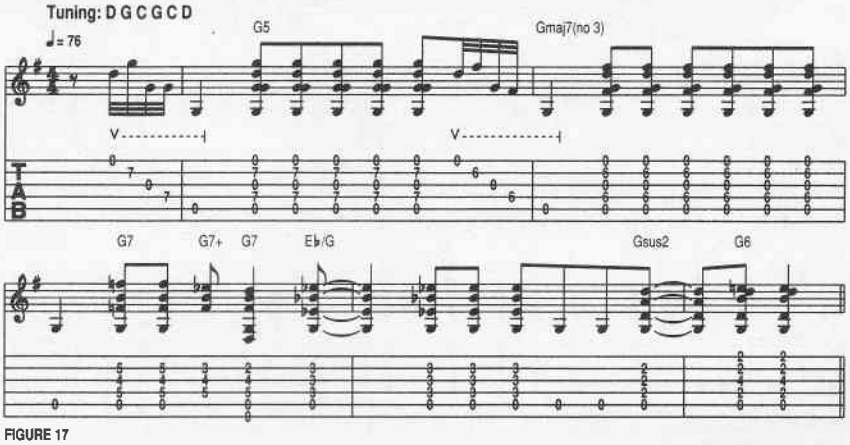
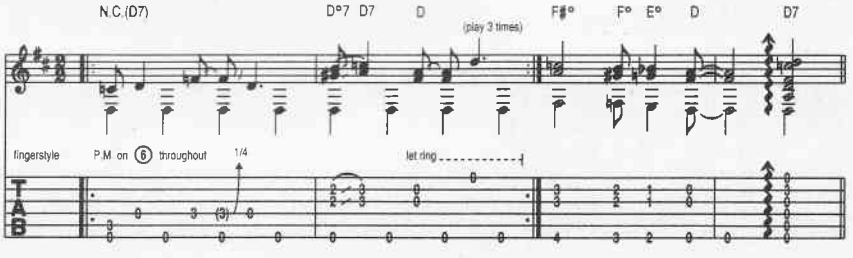


FIGURE 17
Tuning: D G D G B D

FIGURE 18
Tuning: D A D F♯ A D



Richards change in open E tuning (see **FIGURE 20**), based on "Street Fighting Man" (*Beggars Banquet*). (In case you're wondering, Richards did use an acoustic on that cut. The overdriven sound was produced by routing the signal through a nasty little portable tape recorder.) Note that the index-finger barre remains for Eadd2/B, a tasty IV chord embellishment.

Jimmy Page took Keith Richards's barre chord embellishment a step further in Led Zeppelin's "Dancing Days" (*Houses of the Holy*), recently covered by Stone Temple Pilots (using acoustic guitars in open G tuning) on the compilation *Encomium: A Tribute to Led Zeppelin*. **FIGURE 21** depicts the basic chord shapes used for the song's verse section. Chordal embellishments are added on the 1st and 2nd strings. Note the interesting use of modal harmony with each chord: C Ionian (C D E F G A B), Db Lydian (Db Eb F G Ab Bb C), Bb Lydian (Bb C D E F G A) and A Phrygian-dominant (A Bb C# D E F G).

If you want to delve a little more deeply into this harmonic territory, check out **FIGURE 22**, which is an extended version of this idea. It makes extensive use of the open strings in conjunction with fretted sixth intervals in open G tuning, in the style of Joni Mitchell on such songs as "Both Sides Now" (*Clouds*). Another fairly well-known example of an acoustic song that uses these same chord shapes, but in open F# tuning (C# F# C# F# A# C#), is "That's the Way," from *Led Zeppelin III*. This pattern of sixths can be transposed easily to open D or E tunings by playing them on the 5th and 3rd strings, as **FIGURE 23** illustrates.

A guitarist who uses open G tuning to great effect is Ry Cooder. Throughout his career, Cooder has employed a wide variety of altered tunings, many of which he created exclusively for specific tunes. A fine example of his usage of open G tuning is "On a Monday" (*Into the Purple Valley*). For "Little Sister" (*Bop Till You Drop*) he uses open G tuning and a capo at the 3rd fret, sounding Bb, which functions as the IV chord in the song's key of F. Cooder refers to this practice—using an open tuning as the IV chord—as "cross tuning."

Another common open tuning based on a major chord is "open C" (C G C G C E). Leo Kottke and John Fahey have worked with this tuning extensively. The big, fat sound of open C tuning lends itself well to ragtime music, as **FIGURE 24** demonstrates. Keep in mind that this and the other four open tunings mentioned earlier (D, E, G and A) can be altered from major to minor by lowering their respective major thirds a half-step, like Ritchie Havens does with open D. For example, open C becomes open C minor (C G C G C Eb) once the 1st string is dropped down a half-step.

Realize also that there's no law stating that only major and minor open tunings should prevail in the guitar world. For example, taking open C tuning and raising the 5th string back to its standard pitch, A, yields what's known as "open C6" tuning (C A C G C E). Jimmy Page used this tuning to perform "Friends" (*Led Zeppelin III*) and "Bron-Yr-Aur" (*Physical Graffiti*), the main theme of which is not unlike the passage depicted in **FIGURE 25**. Be creative and adventurous when it comes to experimenting with open tunings—you may possibly discover your own "lost chord."

HYBRID TUNINGS AND BEYOND

As a musical composition in an alternate tuning develops, it sometimes becomes necessary to modify the tuning in question. When that happens, the result can often be some form of "hybrid tuning"—either a combination of two common alternate tunings or one tuning with a slight twist (as in **FIGURE 25**, where one string was retuned). Michael Hedges is

FIGURE 19

FIGURE 20

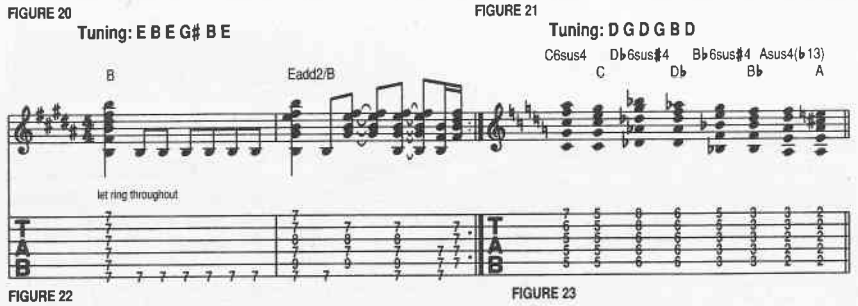


FIGURE 21

FIGURE 22

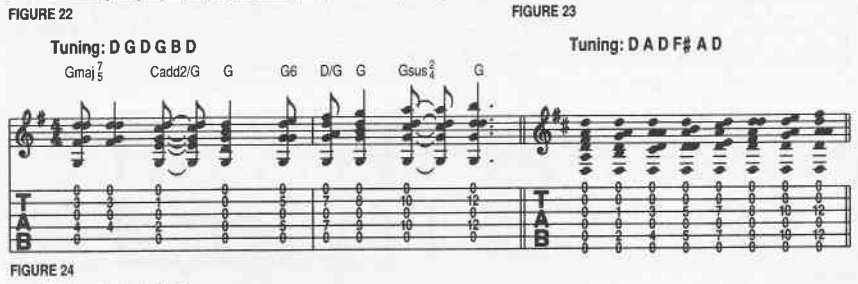
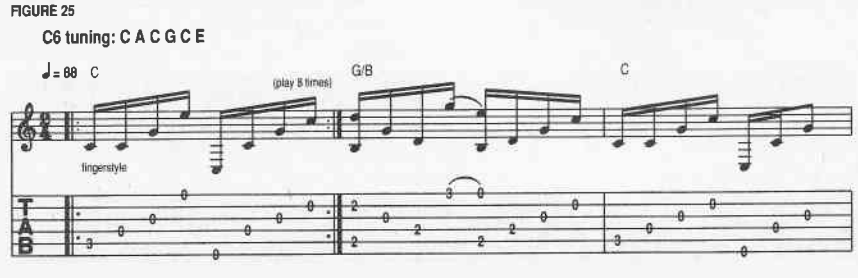


FIGURE 23

FIGURE 24

FIGURE 25



a leading exponent of hybrid tunings, since he often composes his music on the piano and then must retune his guitar to accommodate each particular piece. One of his specialties is making colorful alterations to D A D G A D tuning. On "Baby Toes" (*Breakfast in the Field*), he raises the 2nd string by a minor third (equal to three frets), from A to C, to get D A D G C D tuning, while for "Funky Avocado" (*Breakfast . . .*) he lowers the 6th string a minor third, from D to B, resulting in B A D G A D tuning.

A hybrid tuning that I discovered, C G D G A D, drops the 6th and 5th strings of D A D G A D tuning down a whole-step. This tuning works great for solo jazz guitar, as exemplified by this arrangement of the intro vamp to Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia" (**FIGURE 26**).

Hedges, who was inspired by David Crosby and Joni Mitchell, has plenty of other unusual hybrid tunings up his picking sleeve, among them D A D E A B ("Naked Stalk," "Jealous Tunnel" and "Scenes," all from *Taproot*); D A D G C E, a combination of D A D G A D and open C ("Silent Anticipations," from *Breakfast in the Field*); B F# C# D A D ("Ménage à Trois" and Hedges's version of Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush," from *Aerial Boundaries*); D A D G C C ("Ritual Dance" and "The Rootwitch," also from *Taproot*); Bb F C Eb Eb Bb (his take on Hendrix's "I Don't Live Today," from *Watching My Life Go By*); and D A E E A A (his cover of "All along the Watchtower," from *Live on the Double Planet*).

FIGURE 27, a composite musical sketch of the Mixolydian riffs in Hedges's "Hot Type" (*Aerial Boundaries*), illustrates how his adventurous usage of hybrid tunings creates the illusion of two or even three guitars (especially when Hedges uses 11- or 17-string harp guitars). In the instance of "Hot Type," the tuning is A B E F# A D, with the 6th string dropped down a fifth into the range of a bass guitar. Note how the ensemble effect is created by letting the melody ring out while simultaneously playing accompanying chords and a bassline. This figure may seem a bit difficult to play at first— it's kind of like learning to juggle— so begin slowly, increasing the tempo after you acquire the necessary coordination to play all three parts.

Other interesting hybrid tunings can be found in Hawaiian guitar music, which has its own rich tradition of "slack key" tunings dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. The most commonly used tunings in this genre are "C Wahine" tuning (C G D G B D), "Atta's C" tuning (C G E G C E) and "A minor seventh" tuning (C E G A C E). Open G tuning is also widely used in the Hawiian guitar repertoire. For great examples of Hawaiian guitar music, check out the compilation album *Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Masters*, available from Dancing Cat Records (distributed by Windham Hill Records/BMG Music, PO Box 9388, Stanford, CA 94309).

Finally, two-hand tapping wizard Stanley Jordan tunes his guitar in perfect fourths (E A D G C F) to make all scale, arpeggio and chord shapes symmetrical across the fretboard.

UNISON TUNINGS

Two of the tunings mentioned above (D A D G C C and Bb F C Eb Eb Bb) feature a *unison-tuned* pair of adjacent strings (strings tuned to the same pitch), and a

FIGURE 26

Tuning: C G D G A D

FIGURE 27

Tuning: A B E F♯ A D

♩= 94

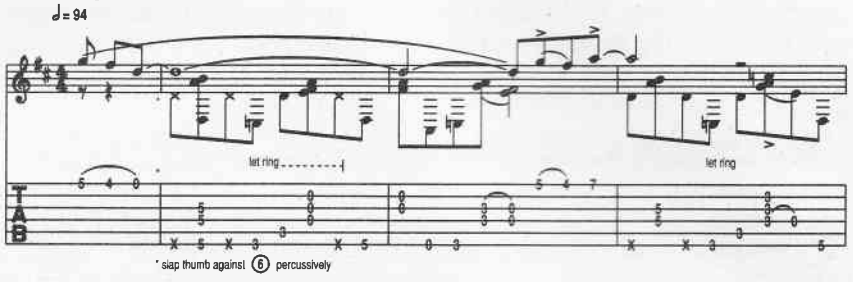


FIGURE 28

Tuning: E B E E B E

FIGURE 29

Tuning: E B E E B E

FIGURE 30

Tuning: D A E A E E

Moderately Fast w/Half-time Feel ♩= 74

third tuning, D A E E A A, actually includes *two* pairs of unison-tuned strings (E E and A A). Unison tunings can give you a natural "chorusing" effect akin to that of a mandolin, 12-string guitar or dulcimer. A classic example of a song that is performed on an acoustic guitar in a unison tuning is Stephen Stills's "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes," from *Crosby, Stills & Nash*. For this song, Stills tunes his guitar to E B E E B E to play riffs similar to the one illustrated in **FIGURE 28**.

If you're the least bit familiar with Eastern music, you may have noticed that this "unison approach" is similar to the way drone strings are used on such instruments as the sitar. To add a little Indian flavor to your own improvisations, try using the E Phrygian-dominant mode (E F G# A B C D) in the "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" tuning to play sitar-like licks like those demonstrated in **FIGURE 29**.

A more recent example of a hit song that uses a unison tuning is the Goo Goo Dolls' "Name" (*A Boy Named Goo*) [*see p. 17 for story*]. For this song, guitarist John Rzeznik tunes his guitar to D A E A E E. **FIGURE 30** is similar to the song's opening and showcases the merits of this unusual and beautiful tuning. Be careful when tuning your 2nd string up to E, though; if it's old, it might break, or, if it's a heavier gauge (.013 or thicker), it may exert an unhealthy amount of "pull" on your guitar's neck.

OTHER TUNINGS

Ralph Towner, formerly with Oregon, has been known to detune one mate in each pair of unison strings on his 12-string, as well as the octave strings, so that each pair of strings sounds in fifths. Pickers in Nashville recording studios often brighten up rhythm guitar ensembles by adding a six-string guitar track performed in (what else?) "Nashville tuning" (referred to in some circles as "high-strung guitar"). This tuning is the equivalent of replacing the guitar's 6th through 3rd strings with the upper octave strings of a 12-string. Kansas' "Dust In the Wind" (*Point of Know Return*) demonstrates that a Nashville-tuned guitar played in tandem with a regular six-string can produce the illusion of a deftly fingerpicked 12-string. For the acoustic intro to Pink Floyd's "Hey You" (*The Wall*), guitarist David Gilmour took Nashville tuning a step further by replacing his regular low-E string with a high-E string, raising the pitch two octaves instead of just one. **FIGURE 31** illustrates the basic chord shapes Gilmour arpeggiates in this tuning. He used the same tuning for the bridge sections of "Comfortably Numb" (*The Wall*).

I was recently editing an anthology of music by guitarist and Windham Hill founder Will Ackerman when I came across a "C6" tuning (C G C G A E) that seemed kind of neat. After tuning my guitar to match, I experimented with a lick inspired by Stevie Wonder's funky clavinet playing in the Seventies (see **FIGURE 32** for the lick in standard tuning), and hit paydirt after trying a slight variation on it (see **FIGURE 33**).

Later, after getting a rather animated piece together with some quirky modulations, I felt it was time to mellow out with some lush, ambient chords. I strummed what would ordinarily be a 3rd-position G barre chord to hear what would happen. The 4th-1st strings sounded cool, but I felt like I needed to try some different bass notes with this "lost chord." Eventually, I switched the root from the 4th string to the 6th and came up with this appealing arpeggiated progression (see **FIGURE 34**). It was gratifying to come up with two pieces in one sitting; however, as I was developing the second one, I kept getting the nagging feeling I'd heard these chord voicings somewhere before. Then, one day, while trying to arrange Aaron Copeland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" (see **FIGURE 35**) in this tuning, I had a rare moment of clarity. Once I got to the turnaround (see **FIGURE 36**), it became obvious that the chord voicings I'd "discovered" earlier weren't that uncommon at all. But hey, that was okay—at least now I could play that part without having to slice the webbing between my fingers!

I hope this primer will inspire you to experiment with altered tunings and create fresh, new sounds. Just make sure you don't tune your strings too high, because they might break or, worse yet, cause your guitar's neck to bow excessively, possibly causing permanent damage. Keep in mind that you can always use a capo with altered tunings to raise the pitch of the strings. GWA

FIGURE 31

6th string tuned two octaves higher than normal.
5th, 4th and 3rd strings tuned one octave higher than normal (see accompanying text).

FIGURE 32

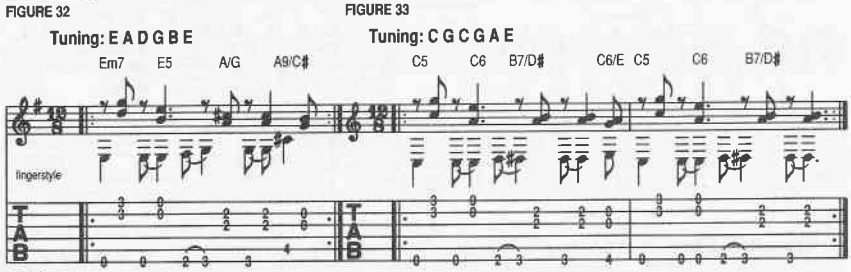


FIGURE 33

Tuning: E A D G B E

Tuning: C G C G A E

FIGURE 34

Tuning: C G C G A E

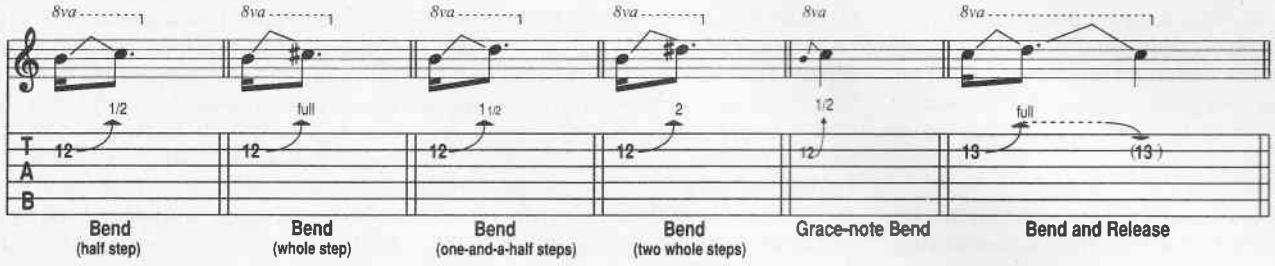
FIGURE 35

FIGURE 36

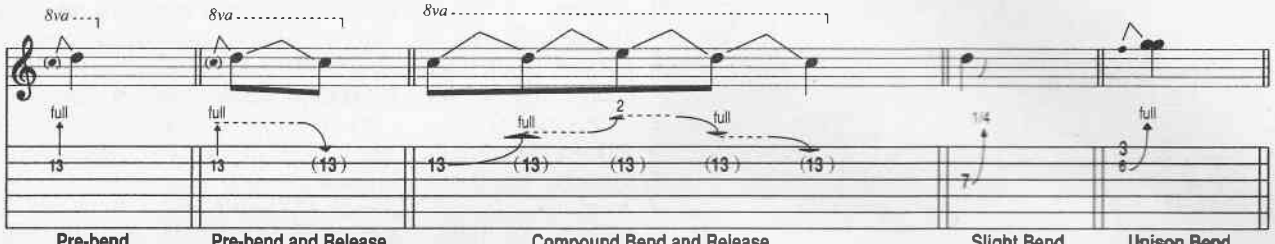
Tuning: C G C G A E

Tuning: C G C G A E

Notation Guide



Bend (half step) | **Bend** (whole step) | **Bend** (one-and-a-half steps) | **Bend** (two whole steps) | **Grace-note Bend** | **Bend and Release**



Pre-bend (string bent before picking) | **Pre-bend and Release** (reverse bend) | **Compound Bend and Release** (first note picked only) | **Slight Bend** (microtone) | **Unison Bend**

Vibrato | **Wide Vibrato** | **Sweep Picking** | **Rake Strings** | **Vibrato Bar Dive and Return** | **Vibrato Bar Pre-dive and Return** | **Vibrato Bar Scooping**

Vibrato Bar Dips | **Slide** (both notes picked) | **Legato Slide** (first note picked only) | **Pull-off** (first note picked only) | **Hammer-on** (first note picked only) | **"Hammer-on From Nowhere"** (left-hand tap) | **Legato Phrasing** (first note picked only) | **Ghost Note**

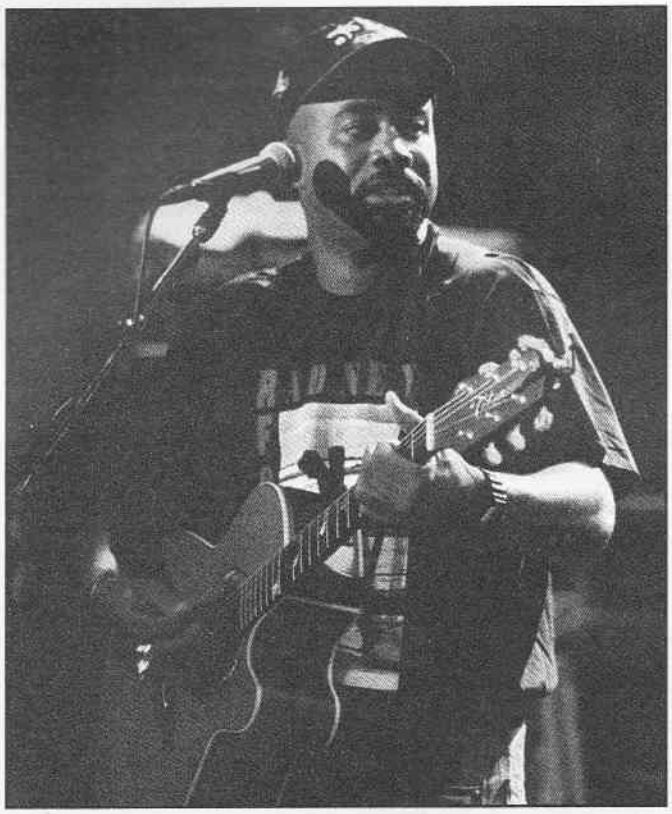
Staccato Phrasing (short notes) | **Choppy Phrasing** (extreme staccato) | **Fret-hand Muting** (percussive tone) | **Pick-hand Muting** (w/palm) | **Tremolo Picking** | **Trill** (Fast Hammer-on/ Pull-off Combination) | **Pick Scrapes**

Natural Harmonics (open strings) | **Artificial Harmonics** (l.h. fret positions indicated in parentheses) | **Pinch Harmonic** (with pick) (overtone of 5th generated) | **Touch Harmonic** | **Tap Harmonic** | **Tap-on Technique** | **Bend and Tap-on Technique**

Hootie & the Blowfish

Continued from page 41

FOSTER: What was your first guitar? Darius?
RUCKER: My first guitar was an old Sears; I think it was an Audio Ultravox or something. I wanted a guitar so bad—it was an electric guitar and I had an amp to go with it . . .
FOSTER: Was it a Silvertone?
RUCKER: It could've been a Silvertone, I'm not sure. I think I still have it, though. Anyway, I never learned to play until I got to college. I used to put rubber bands on it for strings and pretend I was Kiss.
FOSTER: Makeup and everything?
RUCKER: Oh yeah, mom used to love me.
FOSTER: [*laughs*] How about you, Mark? What was your first guitar?
BRYAN: I went to the Harmony Hut up at the mall right by my house, and my mom bought me this Ibanez. It had a dark stain on it, and it was real pretty.
FOSTER: What are you guys playing these days?
RUCKER: My favorite guitars are my 00-18 Martin guitar and my Takamine Santa Fe. The Takamine is my stage guitar, and I love it. I beat it to death.
FOSTER: How long have you had that 00-18?
RUCKER: I just bought it about four months ago. I think it's just super. I bought it because of Nanci Griffith, who plays one. She sang about it in [her song] "Listen to the Radio."



RUCKER ONSTAGE, SPORTING A RADNEY FOSTER T-SHIRT

FOSTER: That's right. What about you, Mark?
BRYAN: I have a '63 Gibson J-45.
FOSTER: Well, that oughta be anyone's favorite guitar! [*laughs*]
BRYAN: Yeah, that's my workhorse. I pretty much do all my writing and recording on that. I don't bring it out on the road, for obvious reasons.
FOSTER: I've got a 25- or 30-year-old Martin D-28. I believe that the souls of a lot of past and future songs are rolling around in the soundhole of that guitar.
BRYAN: Yeah, man.
RUCKER: Man, you make things so vivid. [*laughs*]
BRYAN: That shit is flowery. It's awesome.
FOSTER: All right. Darius, what rig do you use on stage?
RUCKER: I play with two Takamine Santa Fe's. I have three I take on the road with me, and I just play them straight, no equalizers or anything.
BRYAN: I didn't use an acoustic on the last tour, but I played Darius's rig. But this summer I'm gonna play a J-100 Gibson, and my Flatiron mandolin.
FOSTER: Any particular rig?
BRYAN: No, I'm probably just gonna go direct with them. The J-100 has an Accutron pickup built into it. It's really sweet—it's got an eq right on the guitar there.
FOSTER: Hey, less is more.
BRYAN: Yeah. Basically, our soundman and I will just get it to where we like the settings and just go with that. And then the mandolin just sounds great the way it is, so that's direct too.
FOSTER: What are the best and worst things about being Hootie & the Blowfish?
BRYAN: Best part: we got to make a second record. [*laughter*] I just love makin' albums, and I'm really proud of the new record. A lot of bands don't get that chance, and we did, so that made me really happy. I guess the worst part is never getting to see home—my girlfriend, my dog . . . I'm just busy as all hell. That'll all come later, but right now I just get real homesick.
RUCKER: Yeah, I think the worst part, definitely, is not getting to see my family, especially my daughter, as much as I'd like to, 'cause I'm so busy, although I do get there as much as I can. I guess the best part is the fact that, in 10 years, no one in the band ever really thought about saying let's break up, no one ever sat down and said, "I'm leaving" or anything. And there's a lot to be said about finally having something to show for 10 years of playing clubs, being called bad names and being broke— to finally getting to enjoy some of the other side of the music business.
BRYAN: Right. Now we get to ride on the tour bus; we don't have to drive ourselves. [*laughter*]
FOSTER: During the course of this past year I read two articles about you guys—one was in *Time* magazine and the other was in *Harper's*—both of which used the experience of Hootie & the Blowfish as a launching pad to talk about racial relations in America. Do y'all find that disturbing? It struck me that both articles were talking very seriously about you without knowing what you are or without ever really dealing with your music. It sort of reminded me of Ronald Reagan quoting "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen and not even realizing what the hell the song was about.
BRYAN: Yeah, it's amazing. When we first got started, I don't think we thought anyone was going to make a big deal out of it [the band's racial makeup]. It really knocked us off our feet when it became an issue, because we never thought about it, and we didn't think anyone else would either.
RUCKER: As far as we were concerned, you had Living Colour and Lenny Kravitz, black guys playing rock and roll—and we just figured we were just another rock and roll band. For us it was just four guys playing together. And it was just wild for them to make it something that we definitely didn't intend it to be. We just wanted to put out our record with four-minute pop songs.
FOSTER: [*laughs*] The point was, you guys lived together in college and became friends . . .
RUCKER: We didn't want to be, we didn't try to be . . .
BRYAN: . . . inter-racial poster boys.
RUCKER: No, we're just a band playing music. On the other hand, if it all leads to some kids looking at us and going, "Maybe my parents were wrong . . ."
FOSTER: I hope so. I really believe that it's possible to change hearts and minds by who we are and how we act together, on a racial level. I also think that music can help change people's hearts and minds about a lot of things. And I hope that your music does that for a new generation.
RUCKER: Or just one person. GWA

LARRY BUSACCA / RETNA LTD.

indie jones

BY *Isaiah Trost*

RECENT INDEPENDENT RELEASES

Singer-songwriter-guitarists, a species that is hardily impervious to most changes in pop music fashion, are currently enjoying a golden age of recording—there are many of them out there, and lots of good ones turn up on the indie labels. Here are some cases in point:

BROOKS WILLIAMS
Knife Edge
(Green Linnet)

Williams is a terrific bottleneck player whose lyrical subject matter, in time-honored tradition, is the road. His travelogue, punctuated by a couple of instrumentals, winds and slides along slowly and sweetly.

RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOTT
South Coast
(Red House)
Woody Guthrie's protégé and Bob Dylan's mentor revisits many tunes he's recorded during the past 40 years. His unaccompanied guitar and storyteller singing ringingly prove that folk music's uncrowned "King of the Road" can still bring it. It's tempting to say that Elliott's picking is Dylanesque, but of course it's the other way around.

FRED EAGLESMITH
Drive-In Movie
(Vertical/Ichiban)
The debut album of a new label created especially to showcase the peripatetic Eaglesmith's considerable talents. Definitely more of a rocker than a folkie, Eaglesmith opens things up with a punchy railroad song, "I Like Trains," and keeps chugging with inspired tales of working-class types.

SARAH ELIZABETH CAMPBELL
A Little Tenderness
(DejaDisc)
The reissue of the Austin-based Campbell's first album hearkens back 20 years to an earlier singer-songwriter era when one could depend on perfectly crafted albums from the likes of John Prine and James Taylor. Campbell's throaty alto and clever songwriting owe a lot to Prine, and her playing resembles Taylor's, but the album's consistency and integrity make it feel more like an unearthed classic than a tribute.

PETER STAMPFEL
You Must Remember This
(Gert Town)
MICHAEL HURLEY
Wolf Ways
(Koch International)
New releases from a couple of Sixties eccentrics and former members of the Holy Modal Rounders. Both are startlingly unique, crazy and winning. Stampfel's album takes on a variety of old songs, from the James Bond theme "Goldfinger" to "Tit Willow," a Gilbert & Sullivan chestnut, turning all of them into childlike yet subversive musical lunacy. Far easier on the ears but no less nutty is Hurley's *Wolf Ways*, an album of gorgeous, original and idiosyncratic "folk" songs that sound simultaneously pre-industrial and futuristic.

THE BROTHER BOYS
Presley's Grocery
(Sugar Hill)
This fine fraternal order tackles old-timey, honky-tonk, bluegrass and rockabilly material with conviction, irreverence and verve. With his insinuating slide and fingerpicking, guitarist-vocalist-songwriter Ed Snodderly takes all the old styles right out of the music museum and makes them jump.

BERT JANSCH
When the Circus Comes to Town
(Cooking Vinyl)
The latest from this British folk godfather finds him just a bit crochety, singing fairly ordinary originals in a voice that can only be described as syrupy. The guitar playing, on the other hand, is masterful, with about a thousand years of fingerpicked Celtic tradition in every note.

PROFESSOR AND MARYANN
Lead Us Not into Penn Station
(Bar/None)
A moody, almost perfumed atmosphere prevails on this new album from Professor and Maryann. Maryann (Danielle Brancaccio), whose breathy, little-girl voice is reminiscent of Rickie Lee Jones's, is complemented by the mellow neo-jazz strumming of Professor (Ken Rockwood).

THE SHIVERS
The Buried Life
(Restless)
Beneath the quiet surface of this second effort by the Shivers churn death, violence and rootlessness. Carey Kemper and Kelly Bell are the lead Shivers, a male/female voice and guitar duo augmented by a drummer. Neil Young's minor-key melodic guitar style sets the countryish, melancholy tone for this compelling collection. GWA

Kyser

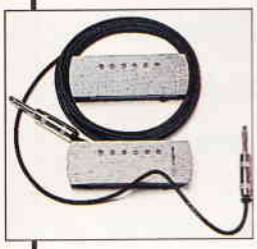
DROP "D" CAPO

Kyser Musical Products introduces the Drop "D" Capo, the newest version of its Quick-Change Capo. The Drop "D" model combines the flexibility and manageability of the Kyser Quick-Change Capo with the ability to leave the bass E string open. The result is easy access to popular alternate tunings. Retail price: $18.95. *Kyser Musical Products, PO Box 6346, Arlington, TX 76005; (214) 988-8738*

DiMarzio

SUPER NATURAL

The new Super Natural is a magnetic sound-hole pickup for acoustic steel string guitars. It features a patent-applied-for hum-cancelling design, balanced magnetic field and lightweight and adjustable pole-pieces. The Super Natural Plus also features a built-in volume control. Retail price: $79.95; Super Natural Plus, $89.00.



DiMarzio, 1388 Richmond Terr., Staten Island, NY 10310; (718) 981-9286

Take Your Pick

THE RHYTHM PICK

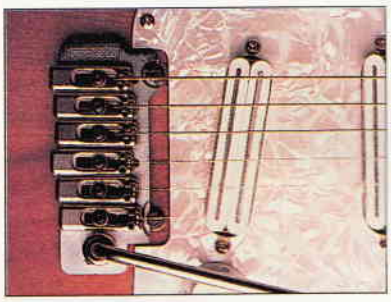
The Rhythm Pick allows guitarists to create their own percussive rhythm accompaniment while playing. This unique pick puts both a guitar pick and a shaker egg in hand at the same time. It is designed with two picks for multiple positions that will make different "shaker" sounds when used. Retail price: $7.99.

Take Your Pick, 7745 Alabama Ave., #7, Canoga Park, CA 91303; (818) 710-8945

Fishman Transducers

POWERBRIDGE

A piezo-equipped replacement bridge/pickup system that not only enhances traditional electric guitar sounds but also augments acoustic

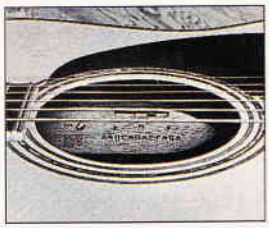


properties of solid-body electrics. Using the unit with a guitar's existing magnetic pickups yields an extended tonal range. The Powerbridge directly retrofits most Stratocaster- and Telecaster-type guitars. New models include the VM-100P vintage-mount vibrato and HS-100P hard-tail Strat Powerbridges. Retail price: Strat model: $249.95; Tele model: $179.95. *Fishman Tranducers, 340-D Fordham Rd., Wilmington, MA 01887; (508) 988-9199*

DillonWittman

MIC-IN TUNER

The Mic-In Tuner for acoustic guitars from DillonWittman combines a clip-in tuner and condenser microphone. Equalizer circuitry has been added to enhance the guitar's natural sound while simultaneously reducing the tendency for feedback. When the volume fader is at zero, the seven-octave quartz tuner is activated; blinking LEDs display the guitar's current pitch. Retail price: $199.95.

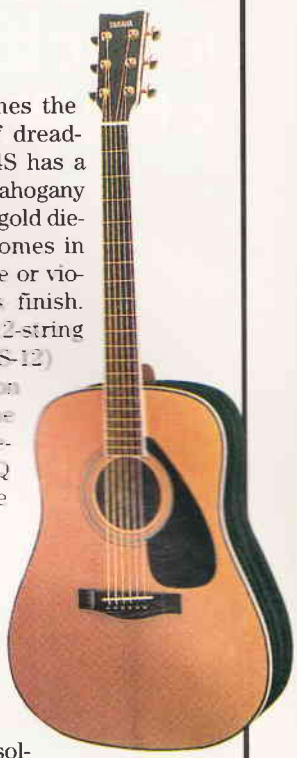


DillonWittman Tuners, RD 4 Box 115A, Bloomsburg, PA 17815; (717) 784-7552

Yamaha

DW SERIES

From Yamaha comes the new DW series of dreadnoughts. The DW4S has a solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides and gold die-cast tuners, and comes in natural, marine blue or violin sunburst gloss finish. There's also the 12-string version (the DW4S-12) and cutaway version with pick-up, the Yamaha APX preamp, and 3-band EQ (the DW4SC). The DW5S has a natural gloss finish, a solid spruce top and Indian rosewood back and sides. Rounding out the line is the DW103E, which has a satin finish, a solid spruce top, an internal pickup, the APX external preamp, and 3-band EQ. Retail price: DW4S: $599; DW4S-12: $649;, DW4SC: $899; DW5S: $649; DW103E: $899.



Yamaha, PO Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622; (714) 522-9011

Godin

MULTIAC DUET

The Multiac Duet has a two-chamber mahogany body and lacquer finish. It features the L.R. Baggs Duet System (a marriage of microphone, ribbon transducer and on-board preamp), and XLR and standard phone outputs. Controls include volume, 3-band eq, presence, notch and mic/pickup mix. Retail price: nylon-string: $1195; steel: $1395.

LaSiDo, 4240 Sere St., St. Laurent, Quebec, Canada H4T 1A6; (514) 343-5560

renaissance guitar

BY E.D. Menasché

TAYLOR 614-C

With the advent of its 600 series, Taylor became one of the few guitar manufacturers to build acoustics out of maple, a wood with a bright, delicate tone that responds quite differently to a player's touch than does the more traditional rosewood. We tested the 614-C, a single cutaway Grand Auditorium model, and were, quite frankly, blown away.

BEAUTIFUL BUT SERIOUS

The 614-C is a joy to look at, hold and play. The lightweight maple body, capped with a Sitka spruce top (scalloped X-bracing), is extremely well constructed and finished, and feels very well balanced. The Grand Auditorium size, a new addition to the 600 line, is designed to strike a balance between the comfort, convenience and accessibility of Taylor's smaller Grand Concert models and the deeper, more powerful tone of a full-sized dreadnought. The 614-C shares some of the dreadnought 610's measurements: body width (16 inches), length (20 inches) and depth (4-5/8 inches), but differs significantly at the waist, which is somewhat narrower, making the 614-C more comfortable to hold. According to Taylor, it also changes the tonal response in favor of the treble frequencies, an important factor behind the 614-C's articulate, uncluttered sound.

The guitar's 25-1/4-inch-scale Honduras mahogany neck looks great; it is lightly stained to match the amber finish of the highly figured maple back and sides. The 20-fret ebony fingerboard, graced with pearl "leaf pattern" inlays, is bound by white plastic. The cutaway, at the 15th fret, makes for easy access to the guitar's upper reaches, enhancing the 614-C's appeal as an instrument for serious soloing. As might be expected, the frets are exceptionally smooth to the touch, although I noticed a couple of small file marks on the binding—no big deal, unless you intend to play the guitar under a microscope. The nut (1-3/4" wide), like the bridge saddle, is made from a synthetic material called Tusq which is noted for hardness and lack of friction—characteristics that contribute mightily to the 614-C's absolutely awesome sustain and excellent tuning stability.

Other vital stats: the 614-C has an ebony bridge, chrome-plated Grover tuning machines, and truss-rod adjustment accessible from the neck. To help make instrument adjustment user-friendly, Taylor ships the guitar with a set-up guide. Like the neck inlays, the abalone soundhole rosette looks clean and elegant; both add to this guitar's general air of simple elegance and quality.

The 614-C is one of those guitars that makes it possible to forget about the physical effort required to play and focus entirely on the music. Simply put, the Taylor responds to technical subtleties with great subtlety. Minute changes in picking hand position and attack yield noticeable sonic results. You can cover a wide dynamic range, too: a gentle attack will yield solid, smooth and articulate notes that project well; hit the 614-C hard, and you'll hear a full sound that doesn't ever quack or buzz out of control. This is especially impressive considering the test instrument's low action. Actually, this is another area where the Grand Auditorium size shows its versatility. While the smaller Grand Concert 612-C [*reviewed in* Guitar World *in February of '94*] seemed to reach its limit when played hard, the 614-C can take a pretty serious pounding. This instrument has so much natural resonance that you can literally finger a note, let go of it, and hear its decay reverberate quite audibly. In fact, that's the one area where the Taylor is harder to play than other instruments.

Harmonics leap off this guitar, and decay with amazing smoothness. And they are all over the neck. Here's a tip: when testing the Taylor, try strumming, say, a ninth chord in a funky pattern, lifting your pinky to hit harmonics alongside the fingered notes. The harmonics, even at the 9th fret, are almost as loud as the fingered notes.

CONCLUSION

At just under $2400 list, the 614-C competes with many fine guitars. But even in such elite company, this is a special instrument: beautifully designed, incredible-sounding and extremely rewarding to play. Perhaps its greatest strength is its versatility. Responsive enough for quiet fingerstyle work, full-bodied enough for barroom bashing and balanced enough for jazz, this is a renaissance guitar. The maple has a unique, cutting tone that provides superior high-end articulation at the expense of the midrange roundness characteristic of rosewood. No, it may not be for every taste. But if you have the budget and are in the market for a flat-out great guitar, this Taylor could well be your perfect fit. *Taylor, 1940 Gillespie Way, El Cajon, CA 92020; (619) 258-1207*

chorus lines

BY E.D. Menasché

ROLAND ACOUSTIC CHORUS

Amplifying the acoustic guitar is a task better suited to a PA than a traditional guitar amp. But hauling a PA is a task better suited to a roadie than a guitar player. That's why acoustic guitar amps, which combine the frequency response and clean sound of a PA with the carry-around convenience of a combo amp, are so rapidly growing in popularity.

Roland's Acoustic Chorus-100 ($1195) is loosely based on the venerable Jazz Chorus, one of the most popular solid-state amps of all time. It's actually pretty large for an acoustic amp (app. 25 x 20-3/4 x 10-3/4 in.; 60 lbs.), and has an open-backed cabinet—unusual for an acoustic combo. Another unusual feature is the tri-amped power section. The open back/tri-amp concept offers a number of advantages: spacious sound (especially with the chorus engaged); efficient use of power (potentially less distortion); and greater clarity and tonal balance.

The Acoustic Chorus is straightforward to operate. Each of the two channels carries its own set of controls, including volume, 3-band eq, high-pass switch (which rolls off low frequencies to reduce stage rumble), chorus switch and reverb switch.

The MIC/AUX channel is equipped with both XLR (MIC) and 1/4-inch (AUX) inputs. Active-input selection is made via a front-panel switch—great if you're a solo performer and want to alternate between using the MIC input for vocals and the AUX input for a drum machine or tape deck.

The guitar channel has a pair of 1/4-inch inputs optimized to handle passive or active pickups. The guitar channel adds a button called "shape" to its control palette, a comprehensive pre-eq switch that chops the midrange and boosts highs and lows. It can be pretty effective, taming that nasty, unnatural midrange quack characteristic of so many piezo pickups.

The output section includes master volume, guitar Anti-Feedback (essentially a sweepable notch-filter) and controls for the effects. By honing in on specific frequencies and reducing their level across a very narrow band, the notch-filter can solve feedback problems without coloring your tone too much. But beware: your physical position in relation to the amp still affects the feedback, and you'll definitely hear a subtle but noticeable difference in the instrument's tone with the Anti-Feedback engaged.

The Acoustic Chorus sounds best at low-to-moderate volume with the eq set near flat. We tested the amp with an Ovation 1994 Collector's model, with the preamp both engaged and off, and attained the best results when using the amp's eq judiciously. The benefits of the tri-amp design can be heard when you strum a big, open chord and hear the smoothness of the bass notes and the clean, sharp response of the highs. The tweeters also respond well to attack. You hear the differences in picking techniques very clearly, and fast runs come though cleanly, with each note as distinct as it should be. It would have been even more impressive if the Acoustic Chorus had greater overall headroom. Pushing the amp past moderate volume resulted in distortion. If you're playing with a larger ensemble, you might want to use the Roland as a personal stage monitor, feeding a signal to the PA. Fortunately, there are a number of DI options on the rear panel. A pair of both 1/4" and XLR outs are provided, and you can switch your direct feed between pre eq (mono) or post eq (stereo).

Both the stereo reverb and chorus sound quite good. The chorus is an enhanced version of the one found on the Jazz Chorus, with three switchable modes and an intensity control. The effect can range from a soft, silky swirl to outright wackiness. Use it with caution; some settings increased the propensity for feedback. The reverb offers three switchable decay times, and was impressively smooth. Both effects can be activated by footswitch and selected to color only one channel at a time. That's especially cool if you're a solo performer who wants to run both vox and guitar through the same amp—you can chorus your guitar, but not your voice. If the built-in effects aren't enough, there's a mono effects loop at the rear panel.

CONCLUSION

Acoustic guitar amps need to succeed on two levels: sound and convenience. The Acoustic Pro offers a nice balance between the two at a relatively affordable price. It's simple to operate, offers good built-in effects and has a number of well-thought-out conveniences. Overall, a good, solid package. *Roland Corp., 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040; (213) 685-5141*